

OUR MAN SCAPIN

A Translation of
Les Fourberies de Scapin

By Molière

Translated by Brett B. Bodemer
2012

CHARACTERS

ARGANTE, *father of Octave and Zerbinette*

GERONTE, *father of Leander and Hyacinthe*

OCTAVE, *son of Argante and lover of Hyacinthe*

LEANDER, *son of Géronte and lover of Zerbinette*

ZERBINETTE, *raised as a Gypsy, but daughter of Argante and lover of Leander*

HYACINTHE, *daughter of Géronte, and lover of Octave*

SCAPIN, *Leander's valet, and master of ruses*

SYLVESTER, *Octave's valet*

NERINE, *Hyacinthe's nurse*

CARLE, *confederate of Scapin, also versed in ruses*

Set in Naples.

Our Man Scapin

ACT I

SCENE ONE

Octave, Sylvester.

OCTAVE

Ah, what aggravating news for a heart in love! To be thrust by idiot circumstance into such agonies! So it was at the harbor, Sylvester, that you've just learned of my father's return?

SYLVESTER

Yes.

OCTAVE

And he arrived just this morning?

SYLVESTER

This morning.

OCTAVE

And that he's determined to have me marry?

SYLVESTER

Yes.

OCTAVE

With a daughter of lord Geronte?

SYLVESTER

Lord Geronte.

OCTAVE

And she's being brought from Tarente for this purpose?

SYLVESTER

Yes.

OCTAVE

And you've learned all this from my uncle?

SYLVESTER

Your uncle.

OCTAVE

To whom my father sent it all by letter?

SYLVESTER

By letter.

OCTAVE

And this uncle, you say, knows all about our affairs?

SYLVESTER

All.

OCTAVE

Ah, speak! would you! And stop making me pull the words from your mouth one by one.

SYLVESTER

What more can I say? You've omitted nothing, and have stated things exactly as they are.

OCTAVE

Can you at least, then, give me some advice, and tell me what I should do in this most inharmonic convergence?

SYLVESTER

Me?! I'm as trapped as you are, and could use some advice myself.

OCTAVE

My father's sudden return is the total ruin my life.

SYLVESTER

And mine no less.

OCTAVE

When he learns how things stand, his storm of impetuous reprimands will break over me.

SYLVESTER

Reprimands! I would be lucky to escape at such a price! I'm the one who's most likely to pay for your follies, and gathering on the horizon I see a cloud of sticks that will crash down on my shoulders.

OCTAVE

Oh, God! How can I escape this cruel trap?

SYLVESTER

Should have thought of that before you let yourself into it.

OCTAVE

You're going to be the death of me with these sermons out of season.

SYLVESTER

And your thoughtless actions will be the double death of me.

OCTAVE

Oh! Oh! What should I do? What's to be done!? What's to be done!?

SCENE TWO

Scapin, Octave, Sylvester.

SCAPIN

Gracious, my lord Octave, what can be the matter? It is clear that you are troubled. What's wrong? Why so distraught?

OCTAVE

Ah! My poor Scapin, I am lost, I am ruined beyond hope, I am the most unfortunate of men.

SCAPIN

How so?

OCTAVE

You're heard nothing about my affairs?

SCAPIN

No, nothing.

OCTAVE

My father and lord Geronte have returned and are wholly resolved to have me marry.

SCAPIN

Hmm! And what's so dire about that?

OCTAVE

Alas! You don't know the cause of my torment?

SCAPIN

No, but you have only to tell me and then I will know. And of course you know I am a sympathetic sort who takes an interest in the gallant affairs of young men.

OCTAVE

Ah! Scapin, if you could figure out some way, or contrive some scheme, for pulling me out of the trouble I'm in, I'd be indebted to you forever.

SCAPIN

To tell you the truth, little eludes me once I choose to get involved. No doubt it is Heaven that has granted me a great gift for fabricating all those agile intrigues of the wit, those ingenious arrangements that the ignorant crowd gives the common name of schemes; and I can say, without bragging, that the world has yet to see a more skillful artisan of ruses and stratagems, or one who has come by more glory than I in this noble métier. But you know, merit is too rudely handled these days, and I have renounced any part in all such matters, on account of a recent problem arising from one such business.

OCTAVE

Hmm? What business, Scapin?

SCAPIN

One that got me mixed up with the law.

OCTAVE

The law?

SCAPIN

Yes, we had a little set-to, we did.

SYLVESTER

You and the law?

SCAPIN

Yes. And the law used me very badly, it did, and the affair has given me such a distaste for the ingratitude of the age that I've resolved to do nothing more of the sort. But enough. Tell me your problem.

OCTAVE

You know, Scapin, that two months ago lord Geronte and my father left on a voyage in which they shared some interest.

SCAPIN

Indeed, I knew that.

OCTAVE

And that my father left me under Sylvester's care, while Leander's father left him under yours.

SCAPIN

Yes, I am well acquainted with my charge.

OCTAVE

Shortly after they left, Leander met a young Gypsy girl and fell in love with her.

SCAPIN

I know that, too.

OCTAVE

Since we are such good friends, he took me into his confidence and led me to see this girl, whom I found to be quite beautiful, but not as beautiful as he wanted me to find her. He spoke only of her every day, exaggerated her beauty and grace at every moment, extolled her intelligence, and effused about the charms of her discourse, which he recited to the last detail, always trying to persuade me that her words were the most inspired in the world. Sometimes he quarreled with me for not sufficiently appreciating what he said, and he ceaselessly reproached me for my indifference to the fires of love.

SCAPIN

I don't see where all this is going.

OCTAVE

One day, while going with him to see the object of his vows, we heard, coming from a small house on a side street, some laments mixed with crying. We asked what it was. A woman told us, between sighs, that we could see some pitiable foreigners, and, unless our hearts were made of stone, we would find ourselves touched.

SCAPIN

Where are you going with all this?

OCTAVE

Out of curiosity I urged Leander to join me in seeing what it was. We entered a hall, and there saw an old woman in her last agony, helped by a servant woman overcome with grief, and a young woman weltering in tears, the most beautiful and touching young woman one could ever see.

SCAPIN

Aha!

OCTAVE

Anyone else would have looked frightful in her state because she was wearing a shabby dress and a coarse blouse. Her hair was rolled up on top of her head in a yellow horn, from which some strands escaped in disorder onto her shoulder; and yet, even like this, she shone with a thousand attractions, and her person was nothing but a concert of harmonies and charms.

SCAPIN

Now I see where we're going.

OCTAVE

If you had seen her, Scapin, in the state I describe, you would have found her most wondrous.

SCAPIN

Oh! I do not doubt it; and without having ever seen her, I see that she was entirely charming.

OCTAVE

Her tears were not the disagreeable kind that disfigures a face; her tears bore a touching grace, and her sadness was the most beautiful in the world.

SCAPIN

I see it well.

OCTAVE

Everyone melted into tears, and as she threw herself lovingly onto the dying woman, whom she called her dear mother, no one could have avoided being pierced by her natural grace.

SCAPIN

In fact it is most touching, and I can see very well what natural grace made you love her.

OCTAVE

Ah, Scapin! A barbarian would have loved her.

SCAPIN

Of course. How could he not?

OCTAVE

After several words, by which I tried to soften the sorrow of this charming but stricken girl, we left the house; and asking Leander what he thought of her, he answered that he found her pretty enough. I was struck by the coldness with which he spoke of her to me, and I could not at all find in him the effect that these beauties had on my soul.

SYLVESTER (*to Octave.*)

If you don't shorten this story we'll be here until tomorrow. Let me finish it in two words. (*To Scapin.*) From this moment his heart took fire. He felt he could not live if he could not console this grieving and adorable girl. His frequent visits were rejected by the servant woman who now served as guardian after her mother's death. See here my man in despair: he pressed, pleaded, and begged: nothing. They told him that the girl, although without money and support, was from a respectable family, and that if his intentions stopped at anything short of marriage, they would not suffer his courtship. See his love enhanced by difficulties! He took thought, mulled it over, reasoned, weighed, and made his decision: and what do you know, they've been married for three days.

SCAPIN

I see.

SYLVESTER

Now, put that together with the surprise return of his father, and his uncle's discovery of the secret marriage, and the new marriage they want him to make with a daughter that lord Geronte had of a second wife that they say he married in Tarente...

OCTAVE

And add to all that the adorable girl's abject poverty, and my complete impotence through a total lack of funds to help her.

SCAPIN

That's it? That's all? What *should* be bothering you is your lack of wherewithal in the face of such a trifle. You look like adults, sure enough, and yet you are too witless to forge some gallant trick, some honest little stratagem, for finessing your affairs. Plague! Well, I do wish I'd already had a chance to dupe our two old geezers. Why, I would have spun them seventeen ways left from last Sunday and they'd still have no clue about who snapped their cords and sent them twirling so.

SYLVESTER

It's true that Heaven has not blessed me with such talents, and that I do not have the wit, like you, to get tangled up with the law.

OCTAVE

Here comes my wondrous Hyacinthe now.

SCENE THREE

Hyacinthe, Octave, Scapin, Sylvester.

HYACINTHE

Octave, is what Sylvester just told Narine true? Your father is back, and he wants you to get married?

OCTAVE

Yes, my beautiful Hyacinthe, and this unwelcome news has put me in a cruel bind. But what is this? You're crying. Why these tears? Do you suspect me – tell me – of some infidelity? Are you not sure of my love for you?

HYACINTHE

Yes, Octave, I am sure that you love me; but I am not sure that you will always love me.

OCTAVE

What! Could one love you and not love you all your life?

HYACINTHE

I have heard tell, Octave, that your sex loves less lastingly than ours, and that the ardors of men are fires which are doused quite as easily as they are born.

OCTAVE

Ah, my dear Hyacinthe, my heart is not made like those of other men, and I know in my bones that I will love you even to the grave.

HYACINTHE

I believe that you do feel what you say and I do not doubt that your words are sincere; but I fear a power which will fight in your heart against the tender sentiments you hold for me. You are dependent on a father who would marry you to another woman; and I am certain that I will die if this misfortune arrives.

OCTAVE

No, dear Hyacinthe, there is no father who can make me break my faith; and I am resolved to quit my country – and even my life, if I must – rather than abandon you. I have already taken, without having ever seen her, a loathing for the woman they've selected for me; and, without being cruel, I wish that the sea had swallowed her up and kept her away from here forever. Stop crying, then, I beg you, my adorable Hyacinthe, because your tears are killing me, and I cannot see them without my heart being pierced.

HYACINTHE

Since you desire it, I will strive to dry my tears, and I will await Heaven's resolve with a constant eye.

OCTAVE

Heaven will surely look on us with favor.

HYACINTHE

It will not be contrary to me so long as you are faithful to me.

OCTAVE

And faithful I will surely be.

HYACINTHE

Then I will be happy.

SCAPIN, *aside*.

She's not such a fool, truly! And not half bad looking, either.

OCTAVE, *gesturing to Scapin*.

Here is a man who can, if he so wishes, be a marvelous help to us in our hour of need.

SCAPIN

I've made the greatest oaths in the world not to get involved; but, if the two of you really want me to, perhaps ...

OCTAVE

Ah! If you only need me to beg you, I will straight off beseech you with all my heart to take control and steer our floundering little boat.

SCAPIN, *to Hyacinthe.*

And you, you say nothing to me?

HYACINTHE

I beg you, too, following his example, by all that is dearest in the world, to serve our love.

SCAPIN

Sometimes one must go against one's wishes, and show some humanity. Relax. I will place myself at your service.

OCTAVE

Believe me that ...

SCAPIN

Ssssh! (*To Hyacinthe.*) Go on, you, and be at ease. (*To Octave.*) And you, get ready to be firm when your father starts thundering at you.

OCTAVE

I swear the thought alone of his first volley makes me tremble, and that my natural timidity will be wholly beyond my control.

SCAPIN

Yet you must appear strong at the first shock. Otherwise, he will instantly seize on your weakness, get the best of you, and treat you like a child. Here, compose yourself a little through art. Show some brazenness, and brace yourself to respond resolutely to everything he can say.

OCTAVE

I will do the best I can.

SCAPIN

Good, let's practice a bit, so you can get used to it. Assume your role and we'll see how you'll do. Let's go, then. Jaw firm, head up, a gaze brimming with confidence.

OCTAVE

Like this?

SCAPIN

More.

OCTAVE

Like this?

SCAPIN

Better. Now pretend that I'm your father, and answer me firmly as though to him. "What, you worthless gallows bird, you villainous low-life, unworthy to be the son of a father such as myself, you dare to appear before my eyes? After your fine conduct, after the base trick you have played in my absence? Is this the fruit of my cares? Ingrate! Is this the respect that is due me?" Come on now, answer. "You have the insolence, you fop, to get engaged without the consent of your father, and marry in secret? Answer me, wretch, answer me. Let's hear some of your great reasons!" Oh Hell! You're mute as a stone.

OCTAVE

That's because I imagined I heard my father.

SCAPIN

Eh! Yes! All the more reason why you can't act like an innocent!

OCTAVE

Okay. I'm going to be more determined, show more resolution, steel myself, and reply with strength.

SCAPIN

Really?

OCTAVE

Certainly.

SYLVESTER

And speak of your old man, here he comes now.

OCTAVE, *fleeing*.

Heavens! I'm lost.

SCAPIN

Hey! Octave, come back! Well, there he goes. Pathetic. Well, let's not just stand here and wait for the inconsiderate old oaf.

SYLVESTER

What should I say?

SCAPIN

Let me do the talking; you just follow my lead.

SCENE FOUR

Argante, Scapin, Sylvester.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

Has anyone ever heard of such a thoughtless act!

SCAPIN, *to Sylvester.*

He already knows about it, and is taking it so hard that he's talking to himself out loud.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

What incredible gall!

SCAPIN, *to Sylvester.*

Let's eavesdrop a little.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

I would really like to know what they can say to me about this fine marriage.

SCAPIN, *aside.*

We have given it some thought.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

Will they try to deny it all?

SCAPIN, *aside.*

No, we hadn't thought of that.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

Or will they try to offer up some lame excuse?

SCAPIN, *aside.*

We could do that.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

Will they try to distract me with some incredible story?

SCAPIN, *aside.*

Maybe.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

Their words will be futile.

SCAPIN, *aside.*

We shall see.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

And as for that miscreant Sylvester, I will beat him even more senseless than he already is.

SYLVESTER, *to Scapin.*

I would have been quite surprised if he had left me out altogether.

ARGANTE, *seeing Sylvester.*

Aha! There you are, sage guardian of the family, excellent keeper of young men!

SCAPIN

Sir, I am delighted to see you back.

ARGANTE

Good day, Scapin. (*To Sylvester.*) You've followed my orders in a most beautiful way, and my son has certainly comported himself with prudence in my absence!

SCAPIN

You are well, from what I see?

ARGANTE

Well enough. (*To Sylvester.*) You don't say a word, lout, not a word?

SCAPIN

And your voyage, was it good?

ARGANTE

Very good. Now, good God, let me quarrel in peace.

SCAPIN

You wish to quarrel?

ARGANTE

Yes, I want to quarrel.

SCAPIN

With who, Sir?

ARGANTE, *gesturing to Sylvester.*

With this wretch.

SCAPIN

But why?

ARGANTE

You haven't heard what's happened while I was away?

SCAPIN

I've heard some talk of some small little thing.

ARGANTE

What do you mean some small little thing! An action like that!

SCAPIN

You're right.

ARGANTE

Effrontery like that!

SCAPIN

It's true.

ARGANTE

A son who marries without his father's consent!

SCAPIN

Yes, something could be said on that score. Yet I am of the opinion that you shouldn't cause too much of a stir about it.

ARGANTE

Well, I am not of this opinion, no, and I will make noise about it to my heart's content. What? Don't you think I have all the reasons in the world to be enraged!?

SCAPIN

It's true, you have, but the thing is done. And I assure you as soon as I learned of it, I was the first one there, and took your part, even to the point of arguing with your son. Ask him what hot reprimands I gave him, and how I took him to task for the little respect he'd shown to a father whose very steps he should be kissing. I could not have spoken better had I been you. But then, you know what? I returned to reason, and considered that in the end, it was not as wrong as one might have believed.

ARGANTE

What are you saying? That there's nothing wrong in getting married point blank with some stranger?

SCAPIN

But what would you have had him do? He had been driven there by his destiny.

ARGANTE

Aha! That's the most beautiful reason in the world. One has only to commit all the crimes imaginable - fraud, theft, robbery, murder - and say in excuse that one had been driven there by destiny.

SCAPIN

Excuse me, you take my words too philosophically. I only meant to say that he found himself fatally engaged in this matter.

ARGANTE

And why was he engaged in it in the first place?

SCAPIN

So, you would have him be as wise as you? Young men, you know, are just that - young men - and they do not have all the prudence to do nothing but what is reasonable: witness our Leander, who, against all my lessons, against all my pleadings, went and did, on his part, something far worse than your son. I would really like to know, if you yourself were not young once, and did not, in your time, carry on romantic intrigues like the others? I've heard it said, I have, that back in the day you were a man among the women, and that with your attire and manners you were among the most gallant of the time, and that you broached none that you did not pursue just to the end.

ARGANTE

That's true, I admit it; but I always held to the rules of gallantry, and never went as far as doing anything like what he has done.

SCAPIN

Well, what would you have him do? He saw a young woman who wanted him - because he takes that from you, to be loved by all the women. He found her charming. He made visits to her, told her many sweet things, sighed gallantly, played the impassioned lover. She gave herself up to his pursuit. He pushed his luck. Next thing you know he was surprised by her parents, who, with the power now in their hands, forced him to marry her.

SYLVESTER

Such a sly devil!

SCAPIN

Would you rather that he had let himself be killed? Better married than dead, don't you think?

ARGANTE

But no one told me that it had happened this way.

SCAPIN, *gesturing to Sylvester.*

Ask it of him rather; he will tell you nothing to the contrary.

ARGANTE, *to Sylvester.*

He was forced into marriage?

SYLVESTER

Yes, Sir.

SCAPIN

Would I lie to you, Sir?

ARGANTE

Then he should have gone to a notary at once to protest it.

SCAPIN

That's precisely what he didn't want to do.

ARGANTE

But that would have made it easier for me to end the marriage.

SCAPIN

End the marriage!

ARGANTE

Yes.

SCAPIN

But you do not want to end it.

ARGANTE

I don't want to end it?

SCAPIN

No.

ARGANTE

What? Don't I have on my side both a father's right and the threat of violence used against my son?

SCAPIN

It is the mode of redress with which he would least agree.

ARGANTE

He would not agree?

SCAPIN

No.

ARGANTE

My son?

SCAPIN

Your son. Would you want him to confess that he submitted out of fear, and that it was under threat of force that he did this thing? He would not wish to avow that. This would be to commit an even greater wrong, and show himself unworthy of you.

ARGANTE

I don't care about that.

SCAPIN

He must, for your honor and his own, say to the world that it was from his own choice and desire that he married her.

ARGANTE

And for my honor and his, I wish him to say the opposite.

SCAPIN

No, I am convinced he will never do that.

ARGANTE

I will make him.

SCAPIN

He will not do it, I tell you.

ARGANTE

He will do it or I will disinherit him!

SCAPIN

You?

ARGANTE

Me.

SCAPIN

Ha!

ARGANTE

What? Ha!

SCAPIN

There's no way you will disinherit him!

ARGANTE

There's no way!?

SCAPIN

No, none at all.

ARGANTE

No?

SCAPIN

No.

ARGANTE

Hmm ... I see. Here's something amusing: *I will not disinherit my son?*

SCAPIN

No, I tell you.

ARGANTE

Who will stop me?

SCAPIN

Yourself.

ARGANTE

Myself?

SCAPIN

Yes. You haven't the heart for it.

ARGANTE

I have so.

SCAPIN

You're joking.

ARGANTE

Not at all.

SCAPIN

Paternal tenderness will perform its office.

ARGANTE

I assure you, it won't.

SCAPIN

Yes, yes, it will!

ARGANTE

I'm telling you how it's going to be.

SCAPIN

In your dreams.

ARGANTE

No, not in my dreams.

SCAPIN

Hey! Don't you know that you are naturally good?

ARGANTE

I am not. And I can be quite vicious when I want to be. Now let's end this conversation that is bringing my bile to a boil. (*To Sylvester.*) Go on, gallows bait, go find my epigone, while I seek out lord Geronte to inform him of my disgrace.

SCAPIN

Sir, if I can be of use to you in any way, you have only to ask.

ARGANTE

I thank you. (*Aside.*) Ah! Why must he be my only son? And if only I still had at this juncture the girl that Heaven took from me, so I could make *her* my heir!

SCENE FIVE

Scapin, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER

Ah, you really are a great, great man! And the problem is already half solved! Yet the need for money, on the other hand, weighs heavily on us, and men from all sides are hounding us for it.

SCAPIN

Allow me. I have just the strategy right here! I only seek in my head somebody who is devoted to us, to play a particular role. Hold on. Hold still a moment. Tilt your hat like a bad boy. Stand on one foot. Put your head to the side. Put on a sullen look. Walk like the king of the roost. Ah, very good. Follow me. I have some other secrets for disguising your face and voice.

SYLVESTER

I only ask you not to get me tangled up with the law.

SCAPIN

Come along, now, come along; we'll share our perils as brothers; and three years more or less on a galley are not enough to frighten a noble heart.

ACT II

SCENE ONE

Geronte, Argante.

GERONTE

Yes, without a doubt, in this weather, our people will be here today; and a sailor who just arrived from Tarente assured me that he saw my man on the point of leaving. But I must say my daughter's arrival finds things poorly disposed for what we've proposed, and what you've just told me about your son puts our previous agreements in a dubious position.

ARGANTE

I beg you not to worry about it; I will answer for it by reversing every obstacle, and shall start working to this end right away.

GERONTE

My faith! Lord Argante. What should I tell you? The education of children is something to which we must pay very close attention.

ARGANTE

That's true, no doubt. But why bring this up?

GERONTE

I bring it up because the bad conduct of young men most often comes from the bad education provided by their fathers.

ARGANTE

What do you mean by that?

GERONTE

What do I mean by that?

ARGANTE

Yes.

GERONTE

That if you had raised your son well, as a good father, he would not have done what he has.

ARGANTE

Oh. I see. And I suppose you've raised yours far better.

GERONTE

No doubt I have, and I would be shocked if my son ever did anything even remotely like what yours has.

ARGANTE

And if this son that you have raised so well - as a good father - had done something even worse than mine? Eh?

GERONTE

What do you mean by that?

ARGANTE

What?

GERONTE

What are you saying?

ARGANTE

I'm saying, lord Geronte, that you should not be so quick to condemn the conduct of others; and that those who would make commentaries should take a good look at their own affairs to make sure something is not amiss.

GERONTE

I don't understand this riddle.

ARGANTE

Let me explain it to you.

GERONTE

You've heard something about my son?

ARGANTE

Could be.

GERONTE

What, then?

ARGANTE

Your good Scapin, in spite of my protests, only told me the matter in a general way. So you can learn the details from him or someone else. For myself, I'm going straight away to consult a lawyer, to find out what can be done in my son's case. I will look for you when I am done.

SCENE TWO

Leander, Geronte.

GERONTE, *alone.*

What can it be? Worse than his son? For myself, I don't see what could be worse done; in fact, to marry without the consent of a father is an act that exceeds the imagination. Ah! There you are!

LEANDER, *rushing towards him for a kiss and hug.*
Ah! My father, what joy I have to see you back!

GERONTE, *refusing the embrace.*
Back off. Let's speak a little of our affairs.

LEANDER
Allow me to hug you, and let ...

GERONTE, *repulsing him again.*
Not so fast, I tell you.

LEANDER
What! My father, you refuse to let me express my joy at seeing you?

GERONTE
Yes, we have something to sort out here first.

LEANDER
What is that?

GERONTE
Hold still, so I can look you in the face.

LEANDER
What?

GERONTE
Look me in the eyes.

LEANDER
And?

GERONTE
What's been going on?

LEANDER
What's been going on?

GERONTE
Yes. What have you done in my absence?

LEANDER
My father, what did you want me to do?

GERONTE

I'm not asking you what I wanted you to do, but what you did.

LEANDER

Me? I've done nothing that you can complain about.

GERONTE

Nothing?

LEANDER

No.

GERONTE

You are quite sure?

LEANDER

I am sure of my innocence.

GERONTE

Scapin, however, has given me a report.

LEANDER

Scapin!

GERONTE

Aha! You're blushing.

LEANDER

He said something to you about me?

GERONTE

This is not the place to air that matter, and we shall do well to discuss it elsewhere. You, go back home. I will return there soon myself. Ah! Traitor, you've dishonored me, I will disinherit you, and you should prepare to flee from my presence forever.

SCENE THREE

Octave, Scapin, Leander.

LEANDER, *alone.*

Betray me like that! This scoundrel, who for a hundred reasons should be the first to conceal the things I entrust to him, is the first to go and reveal them to my father! I swear to Heaven this treachery will not go unpunished.

OCTAVE

My dear Scapin, what do I not owe you for your cares! You are a man of amazing skill and dexterity! And I thank Heaven for having sent you to me in my hour of need!

LEANDER

Aha! There you are. I am delighted to see you, Sir Scoundrel.

SCAPIN

Sir Scoundrel yes, and *your* servant.

LEANDER, *taking his sword in hand.*

You dare to play the joker? Ah, I will teach you ...

SCAPIN, *falling to his knees.*

Sir!

OCTAVE, *getting between the two to stop Leander from striking.*

Easy! Leander!

LEANDER

No! Octave! Don't stop me, I beg you!

SCAPIN, *to Leander.*

Eh! Sir!

OCTAVE, *restraining him.*

Please!

LEANDER, *wanting to strike Scapin.*

Let me satisfy my rage.

OCTAVE

In the name of our friendship, Leander, do not mistreat him.

SCAPIN

Sir, what have I done to you?

LEANDER

What have you done to me, traitor!

OCTAVE, *holding him back.*

Eh! Not so fast!

LEANDER

No, Octave, I want him to confess his perfidy to me right here and now. Yes, wretch, I know the game you've played on me, they've just told me; perhaps you didn't think they would reveal the

secret to me; but I want to hear you confess it from your own mouth, before I send this sword right through your body.

SCAPIN

Ah, Sir! Could you be so pitiless!?

LEANDER

Speak, then.

SCAPIN

I've done you some wrong, Sir?

LEANDER

Yes, knave, and your conscience tells you too well what it is.

SCAPIN

But I assure you that I don't know.

LEANDER, *advancing to strike him.*

You don't know!?

OCTAVE, *holding him back.*

Leander!

SCAPIN

All right, all right. Since you wish so wish it, Sir, I confess that it was my friends and I who drank the cask of Spanish wine that you'd received as a gift; and that it was I who put a hole in it, and poured water on the ground to make it look like the wine had all leaked out.

LEANDER

That was you, wretch? Who drank up my Spanish wine, and made me dismiss my servant, because I was sure she had done it?

SCAPIN

Yes, Sir. And I do ask your pardon for it.

LEANDER

I'm certainly glad to learn of this, but that's not what is in question now.

SCAPIN

That's not it, Sir?

LEANDER

No. It's another business that affects me far more deeply, and I want to hear you confess it.

SCAPIN

But, Sir, I don't remember having done anything else.

LEANDER, *wanting to strike him.*

You won't confess?

SCAPIN

Eh?

OCTAVE, *holding him back.*

Easy!

SCAPIN

Well, yes, Sir, now that you put it that way: it's true that one evening three weeks ago you sent me to take a small watch to your young Gypsy girl. I returned home, my clothes all covered with mud, and my face spattered with blood, and told you that I'd run into some robbers who, after giving me a good thrashing, had stolen the watch. It was I, Sir, who kept the watch.

LEANDER

You kept my watch?

SCAPIN

Yes, Sir, so I could tell what time it was.

LEANDER

Ah, yes, I'm learning some very pretty things, I am, and I have a very devoted servant, truly. But that's still not what I'm asking about.

SCAPIN

That's not it, either?

LEANDER

No, wretch; it's something else I want you to confess.

SCAPIN, *aside.*

Damn!

LEANDER

Out with it quickly now, I'm in a hurry.

SCAPIN

Sir, that's all I have.

LEANDER, *wanting to strike Scapin.*

That's all?

OCTAVE, *getting between the two.*
Eh!

SCAPIN

Well, all right. Yes, Sir: do you remember the werewolf who attacked you that night six months ago? The one who struck you so many blows with a stick, that in your hurry to get away almost broke your neck by falling into a pit?

LEANDER

Yes. What of it?

SCAPIN

That was me, Sir, pretending to be a werewolf.

LEANDER

You, whelp, were the werewolf?

SCAPIN

Yes, Sir, just to make you afraid, and to break you of running around every night as you were in the habit of doing at the time.

LEANDER

A little down the road, believe me, I will not forget these little services you've done me. But right now I want to get at the pertinent fact, and to have you confess what you told my father.

SCAPIN

Told your father?

LEANDER

Yes, knave, my father.

SCAPIN

But I haven't seen him since his return.

LEANDER

You haven't seen him.

SCAPIN

No, Sir.

LEANDER

Really?

SCAPIN

Really. Shall I have him tell you that himself?

LEANDER

Yet it's from his mouth that I learned it.

SCAPIN

If I may, Sir, he did not tell you the truth.

SCENE FOUR

Carle, Scapin, Leander, Octave.

CARLE

Sir, I bring you some news which does not bode well for your love.

LEANDER

What is it?

CARLE

The Gypsies are about to leave port, and will take your Zerbinette with them, and she, with tears in her eyes, begged me to come promptly and tell you, that, if in two hours you do not bring the money they demand, you will lose her forever.

LEANDER

In two hours?

CARLE

Two hours. (*He leaves.*)

LEANDER

Ah, my dear Scapin, I'm begging for your help!

SCAPIN, *passing in front of him with a proud air.*

"Oh, my dear Scapin!" I am "my dear Scapin" only when you need me.

LEANDER

Go on, I will pardon all the pranks you've just confessed to, and worse ones yet, if there are any.

SCAPIN

No, no, pardon nothing. Thrust your sword right through my body. I would be only too delighted if you'd kill me.

LEANDER

No, I beg you instead to give me life, in serving my love.

SCAPIN

No, no. Not at all; you would do better to kill me.

LEANDER

You are too valuable to me, and I beg you to assist me with your marvelous genius which, like a cat, always lands on its feet.

SCAPIN

No, kill me, I tell you.

LEANDER

No, please, don't think of it, and lend your address instead to how you can help me!

OCTAVE

Scapin, you must do something for him.

SCAPIN

After a tirade of savage threats like that?

LEANDER

I beg you to forgive my anger and give me your help instead.

OCTAVE

I join my prayers to his.

SCAPIN

The lingering insult weighs on my heart.

OCTAVE

You must let your resentment go.

LEANDER

Would you abandon me, Scapin, with my love in this cruel extremity?

SCAPIN

What? Just get over it - like that - out of nowhere?

LEANDER

I was wrong, I admit it.

SCAPIN

Treat me like a liar, thief, and cheat!

LEANDER

I regret it for all the world.

SCAPIN

Threatening to skewer me with your sword!

LEANDER

I beg your pardon with all my heart; and if all I have to do is throw myself at your knees, I will do it, Scapin, and implore you once more not to abandon me.

OCTAVE

Ah! Really, Scapin, your heart must soften at a plea such as this!

SCAPIN

All right. Rise. But next time, don't be so rash.

LEANDER

You'll help me?

SCAPIN

I'll think about it.

LEANDER

But we're losing time already.

SCAPIN

A little less anxiety, please. How much money do you need?

LEANDER

Five hundred écus.

SCAPIN (*To Octave.*)

And how much do you need?

OCTAVE

Two hundred pistoles.

SCAPIN

Well, it's simple. I will get this money from your fathers. (*To Octave.*) As for your father, the trap is already set; (*To Leander*) and as for yours, although he is stingy to the last degree, less finesse is in order, for you know, as for wit, he is not – thank God – well-endowed, and he is the type of man that can be made to believe what one wants. Don't be offended: there's no similarity between the two of you; and you know that it is the opinion of every thinking man that he is your father only in form.

LEANDER

Easy, Scapin.

SCAPIN

No, there will be no balking. But here comes Octave's father now. Let's start with him, since he's right here. You two, get lost. (*To Octave.*) And you, tell your man Sylvester to come quickly and play his part.

SCENE FIVE

Argante, Scapin.

SCAPIN, *aside.*

Here he is, stewing.

ARGANTE, *believing himself alone.*

How could anyone be so thoughtless and inconsiderate! To go and get engaged like that! Ah! Ah! Impertinent youth!

SCAPIN

Sir, your servant.

ARGANTE

Good day, Scapin.

SCAPIN

You're thinking about your son?

ARGANTE

I tell you it fills me with rage.

SCAPIN

Sir, life is full of reversals. It is good to keep oneself constantly prepared for such things; and long ago I heard someone repeat an ancient saying that I've remembered ever since.

ARGANTE

And what is that?

SCAPIN

That, for no matter how short a time the father of a family has been away from his home, he should imagine all the horrible accidents that might greet him on his return: to picture his house burned down, his money stolen, his wife dead, his son maimed, his daughter, well ... and whichever of these things he finds has not happened, he can attribute to his good fortune. For myself, I have always practiced the lesson in my own small way; and I have never returned home without bracing myself for the rage of my masters, for reprimands, insults, kicks, whacks, or even a string of sharp spur-pricks; and then, for any of these that fail to happen to me, I always give thanks to my good destiny.

ARGANTE

Yes, that's all well and good. But this obnoxious and hasty marriage which threatens to spoil the one we've arranged, is something I cannot bear, and I've just consulted the lawyers on how to have it broken.

SCAPIN

Sir! No! If you take my word for it, you will try to settle the affair in some other way. You know what lawsuits are like in this country, and you are bound to sink in a tangled thicket.

ARGANTE

You're right, of course. But what alternative do I have?

SCAPIN

I believe, Sir, that I've found a way to come to your aid. My compassion for your recent outburst obliged me to seek some way to ease your vexation; for I cannot see irresponsible sons galling such respectable fathers without being moved by it; and I have ever felt a particular concern for your person.

ARGANTE

I thank you for that.

SCAPIN

So I took the liberty of seeking out the brother of the girl in question. He is a mercenary of the kind that is all sword-strokes, and who speaks of nothing but bloodshed and has no more conscience about killing a man than he does about downing a glass of wine. I set him right about this abrupt marriage, explained how the violence of it offered an easy reason to have it annulled, and pointed out your prerogatives as a father and the support you would have in the eyes of justice, your right, your money and your friends. Finally, I turned the matter from so many angles that he lent his ear to the propositions for settling the affair for a certain sum; and he will consent to breaking the marriage, provided that you give him the money.

ARGANTE

And what did he demand?

SCAPIN

Oh, at first he wanted the moon and the stars.

ARGANTE

And then?

SCAPIN

Merely extravagant things.

ARGANTE

And then?

SCAPIN

He did not ask for more than five or six hundred pistoles.

ARGANTE

Let five or six hundred four-day fevers take him! Is he crazy?

SCAPIN

That's what I said to him. I had rejected similar such propositions outright, and let him know in no uncertain terms that you're no dupe to be levied some five or six hundred pistoles. Finally, after a lot of talking, our discussions came to this. "The time has come" he told me, "for me to leave for the army. I must equip myself quickly, and my urgent want of money forces me to agree, in spite of myself, to accept what you propose. I need a good horse, and can't get a half decent one for less than sixty pistoles."

ARGANTE

Sixty pistoles! Is that it? Let him have it.

SCAPIN

"I need a harness and pistols, and that will come to twenty more pistoles."

ARGANTE

Twenty pistoles and sixty, that makes eighty.

SCAPIN

Exactly.

ARGANTE

That's a lot; but so be it, I will give it to him.

SCAPIN

"I also need a mount for my valet, which costs a good thirty pistoles."

ARGANTE

Oh, No! How he would strut! He'll get nothing from me.

SCAPIN

Sir.

ARGANTE

No, he's totally out of line.

SCAPIN

Would you have his valet go on foot?

ARGANTE

Let him go on his hands if he pleases; and the master, too.

SCAPIN

My God, Sir! Don't balk at such a little thing. Don't take the matter to court, I beg you, give it to him to save yourself from the greedy clutches of justice.

ARGANTE

All right. I'll give him these thirty pistoles, too.

SCAPIN

"I also need," he told me, " a mule to carry ..."

ARGANTE

Oh, let him march to hell with his mule! That's too much, and we will go before the judges.

SCAPIN

Please, Sir.

ARGANTE

No, I will not do it.

SCAPIN

Sir, a little mule.

ARGANTE

I would not even give him an ass!

SCAPIN

Consider ...

ARGANTE

No, I would rather plead my case.

SCAPIN

Sir, do you really know what you are saying? Do you have any idea what you'd be getting yourself into? Take a look at the back roads of justice; do you see how many levels of jurisdiction and appeals there are; how many perplexing procedures, how many pairs of predatory claws you must pass through – sergeants, bailiffs, lawyers, registrars, assistant prosecutors, recorders, judges and their clerks. There is not one of these men, who, for the least thing, cannot hit you up with the best right in the world. A sergeant will record some false charge, and you will be condemned without your even knowing it. Your chief counsel will side with your enemy, and your last penny will have vanished in vain. Your junior lawyers, also won over, will be totally out of reach when they should plead your case, or will tell you why you should beat a retreat, refusing to attack. While you're looking the other way, the registrars will issue warrants for your arrest. The recorder's clerk will drop whole passages, and the recorder

will even deny having ever seen them. And then, in spite of the greatest precautions in the world, you will be appalled to find out that the judges have been solicited against you. Eh! Sir! If you can, save yourself from this inferno! To enter a lawsuit is to be damned in this world; and the thought alone of a process is enough to make me flee to the Indies.

ARGANTE

How much was it for the mule?

SCAPIN

Sir, for the mule, his horse and that of his valet, for the harness and the pistols, and to pay a little debt to his hostess, he demands in all two hundred pistoles.

ARGANTE

Two hundred pistoles.

SCAPIN

Yes.

ARGANTE, *walking in anger the length of the stage.*

No, no, we will plead our case.

SCAPIN

But think ...

ARGANTE

I will plead.

SCAPIN

You don't want to ...

ARGANTE

I want to plead.

SCAPIN

But to plead, you must have money, and lots of it; you need it for the charge; you need it for the affidavits; you need it for the power of attorney, depositions, hearings, and for the prosecutor's time; you need it for consultations with the lawyers and the days spent in court; for the right of withdrawing your retainer and for the copying of the large printed records; you need it for the reports and for reimbursing the judge if you win; for the recorder, for decrees, warrants, notarizations, and the serving of papers by the clerks; without speaking of all the generous presents you must give on every side. Give the money, I say, to this man here, and you will be free of all that.

ARGANTE

But two hundred pistoles!

SCAPIN

Yet I've made a little calculation on my own of the costs of justice; and I have found that in giving two hundred pistoles to this man, you will save at least a hundred and fifty pistoles, and that is not counting all the cares, alarms, and vigils that you will be spared. And lastly, when I think how you will have to wipe out the nasty things the lawyers will say about you in front of everyone, I must say I would much prefer to give three hundred pistoles to this man than to plead.

ARGANTE

I dare the lawyers to say whatever they want about me.

SCAPIN

You will do as you please; but if I were you, I would flee like the wind from a lawsuit.

ARGANTE

I'm not about to give away two hundred pistoles.

SCAPIN

Here comes the man involved now.

SCENE SIX

Sylvester, Argante, Scapin.

SYLVESTER, *disguised as mercenary soldier.*

Scapin, tell me a little about this Argante, the father of Octave.

SCAPIN

Why should I, Sir?

SYLVESTER

I've just heard that he wants to take me to court, so he can have my sister's marriage annulled.

SCAPIN

I don't know if he plans to do that; but I do know that he would not consent to the two hundred pistoles that you asked for, saying it was too much.

SYLVESTER

Plague! Clap! Pox! If I find him, I will run him through the spine even if I am roasted alive for it!

(Argante, to avoid being seen, holds himself, trembling, behind Scapin.)

SCAPIN

Sir, Octave's father is a brave man, and I doubt that he fears you in the least.

SYLVESTER

Hah! Not fear me? By his scrawny neck! If he were here I would fillet him like a fish on the spot. (*Seeing Argante.*) Who's this man?

SCAPIN

No, it's not him, Sir, it's not him.

SYLVESTER

Perhaps it's a friend of his?

SCAPIN

On the contrary, Sir, it's his worst enemy.

SCAPIN

His worst enemy?

SCAPIN

Yes.

SYLVESTER

Well, a good thing, and well met! (*To Argante.*) You are an enemy, Sir, of that fencing-dummy Argante, eh?

SCAPIN

Yes, yes, I tell you.

SYLVESTER, *taking him by the hand.*

Put it there, put it there. I give you my word, and swear to you on my honor, by the sword that I bear, by all the oaths that I know full well how to make, that before the day is done I will slay this worthless excuse for a human being.

SCAPIN

Sir, such violence is not permitted in this country.

SYLVESTER

You think I care? I have nothing to lose.

SCAPIN

He is prepared for anything, I assure you; and his family, friends and servants will all rise to defend himself against your fury.

SYLVESTER

That's what I want, by God! That's exactly what I want! (*He takes his sword in hand and wields it fiercely, as though he had several people in front of him.*) Ah, plague! Ah, pox! Let me find him right now with all his friends and family! Let him appear before my eyes in the midst of thirty people. Let them attack me with their weapons in hand! What, weaklings! You have the

effrontery to attack me? Let's have at it, by God! Kill! No quarter! (*Striking out in all directions as though fighting several people.*) Yield! Close! Strike! Slow foot, bad eye! Ah! Wretches, ah! Slackers all, you wanted some of this! I will make you fight till you are sick of it. Fight harder, ruffians, fight harder! Come on. This foot. That foot. The other. (*Turning toward Scapin and Argante.*) What! You cringe, you dogs! Firm foot, by God! Stand strong!

SCAPIN

Sir, it's not us you want.

SYLVESTER

Here's the man who will teach you to toy with me!

(*He leaves.*)

SCAPIN

Ah, yes, now, Sir, you see how many people will die for your two hundred pistoles. I wish you good luck.

ARGANTE (*Shaking.*)

Scapin.

SCAPIN

Yes?

ARGANTE

I have decided to give him the two hundred pistoles.

SCAPIN

Out of my love for you, I am delighted to hear it.

ARGANTE

Let's go after him, for I have the money on me.

SCAPIN

Better to just give it to me. For your honor's sake you must not appear before him, after having passed here for your own worst enemy; what's more, in introducing you I fear he might take it in his head to try demanding even more.

ARGANTE

Yes, but I would feel easier if I saw my money actually change hands.

SCAPIN

You don't trust me?

ARGANTE

No, it's not that, but ...

SCAPIN

My God, Sir, I am either a scoundrel or a man you can trust; it's one of the two; do you think in all of this I have any other interest than yours or that of my master? If I am suspect in your eyes, I will no longer involve myself in it, and you have only to seek, from now on, someone else who can settle your affairs.

ARGANTE

Take it, then.

SCAPIN

No, Sir, do not trust me with your money. I would feel easier if you went through some other intermediary.

ARGANTE

My God, take it!

SCAPIN

No, I tell you, do not trust me. How do you know I'm not just trying to take you for your money?

ARGANTE

Here, I tell you. Don't make me argue any more. But be sure to get a receipt for it.

SCAPIN

Let me worry about that; it's no affair for a fool.

ARGANTE

I will go wait at my house.

SCAPIN

I will join you there soon. (*Alone.*) Well, that's one down. Now I only have to find the other. Well! What do you know? Here he comes now. It seems that Heaven is leading them to me one after the other like lambs to the slaughter.

SCENE SEVEN

Geronte, Scapin.

SCAPIN, *pretending not to see Geronte.*

O, Heavens! O, abrupt disgrace! O, miserable father! Poor Geronte, what will you ever do?

GERONTE, *aside.*

What's he saying about me, with his face all in a twist?

SCAPIN, *same game.*

Isn't there anyone who can tell me where I can find lord Geronte?

GERONTE
Scapin, what is it?

SCAPIN, *running around the stage, not wanting to see or hear Geronte.*
Where is he so I can tell him of his misfortune?

GERONTE, *running after Scapin.*
What's the matter?

SCAPIN, *same game.*
I've run to the ends of the earth looking for him, but it's no use.

GERONTE
I'm right here.

SCAPIN, *same game.*
He must have hidden himself in some unknown inner sanctum that no one can guess.

GERONTE, *stopping Scapin.*
Hey! Are you blind? I'm right here!

SCAPIN
Ah, Sir! It's been impossible to find you!

GERONTE
I've been right under your nose for an hour. What is it, then?

SCAPIN
Sir ...

GERONTE
Yes?

SCAPIN
Sir, your son ...

GERONTE
Yes? My son, what?

SCAPIN
Has fallen into the most astonishing disgrace in the world.

GERONTE
Which is?

SCAPIN

Not long ago, I found him all bilious due to something you'd said to him – something in which, by the way, you had quite inappropriately mixed me up. Seeking to take his mind off his sorrow, we went for a walk along the harbor. There, among several other things, we stopped to gaze at an admirably equipped Turkish galley. A friendly young Turk extended his hand and invited us aboard. We climbed up; he made us a thousand civilities, and then served us a meal, in which we ate the most excellent fruits ever and drank some of the best wine in the world.

GERONTE

What's so grave about that?

SCAPIN

Hold on, Sir, I'm getting to that part. While we were eating, the boat put out to sea, and, leaving the port, the Turk put me in a skiff, and sent me back to tell you that if you do not send me back with five hundred écus, he will take your son to Algiers.

GERONTE

What! Five hundred écus!

SCAPIN

Yes, Sir; and what's more, he's only given me two hours to get back.

GERONTE

Ah! Damned Turk, killing me in this way!

SCAPIN

It's up to you to act, Sir - and promptly, too – to save the son that you love so tenderly from irons.

GERONTE

Why did he get on that miserable boat?

SCAPIN

He was not thinking about what might happen.

GERONTE

Go, Scapin, quickly, and tell the Turk that I've going to send a judge after him.

SCAPIN

A judge on the open sea! Are you joking?

GERONTE

What was he going to do on that galley?

SCAPIN

Sometimes an evil destiny draws people on.

GERONTE

You must, Scapin, I tell you, you must now prove yourself a faithful servant.

SCAPIN

How is that, Sir?

GERONTE

Go tell this Turk to send my son back, and you take his place while I gather the money that he demands of me.

SCAPIN

Sir! Do you have any idea of what you're saying? Do you think this Turk is so deficient in sense that he's going to take a lackey like me in place of your son?

GERONTE

Why did he ever look at this misbegotten boat?

SCAPIN

He had no notion of the misfortune that would find him there. But remember, Sir, the Turk only gave me two hours, and time is slipping away fast.

GERONTE

And you say that he demands ...

SCAPIN

Five hundred écus.

GERONTE

Five hundred écus! Agh! Has he no conscience?

SCAPIN

Well, yes, of course – the conscience of a Turk!

GERONTE

Doesn't he know the value of five hundred écus?

SCAPIN

Indeed, Sir, he knows that it's fifteen hundred pounds.

GERONTE

Does the traitor think that fifteen hundred pounds is found in the hoof of a horse?

SCAPIN

These men don't understand reason.

GERONTE

But what was he going to do on that scow?

SCAPIN

Who knows? But it's so; one cannot foresee the future. Please, Sir, hurry.

GERONTE

Here, take the key to my chest.

SCAPIN

Good.

GERONTE

You will open it.

SCAPIN

All right, then.

GERONTE

You will find a large key on the left side, which opens my attic.

SCAPIN

Yes.

GERONTE

You will take all the clothes which are stored in the large brown armoire there and sell them to the second-hand clothes dealer to ransom my son.

SCAPIN, *taking the key.*

Sir, are you dreaming? I wouldn't get a hundred francs for what you've just described, and what's more, you know how little time we have.

GERONTE

But what was he thinking when he got on that miserable Galley?

SCAPIN

Forget the ship, I tell you, these are just wasted words, and think that with each passing moment you are increasing the risk of losing your son. My poor master! Perhaps I will never ever see you again, and perhaps while we're quibbling right now, they're taking you in chains as a slave to Algiers! But Heaven will be my witness that I did my all for you, and that if you fail to be ransomed, the blame can only be laid on deficient love of a father.

GERONTE

Wait, Scapin, I will go get the sum.

SCAPIN

Hurry up then, Sir, for I fear our time is running out.

GERONTE

Now, it was four hundred écus, you said?

SCAPIN

No, five hundred.

GERONTE

Five hundred?

SCAPIN

Yes.

GERONTE

Why did he get on that boat?

SCAPIN

You're right, he shouldn't have, but he did, so hurry.

GERONTE

Weren't there other walks he could have taken?

SCAPIN

Of course there were. But go quickly.

GERONTE

O, cursed Galley!

SCAPIN, *aside*.

This ship really seems to have stuck in his craw.

GERONTE

Ah, here! Scapin, I had forgotten that I'd just received this very amount in gold, though I certainly didn't expect to be parted from it so soon. (*He presents his purse, but does not, however, let go of it, and, in his passion, he switches it from one hand to the other, as Scapin tracks the purse with his own hands.*) Here! Go ransom my son!

SCAPIN, *holding out his hand*.

Yes, Sir.

GERONTE, *holding onto the purse while he seems to want to give it to Scapin.*
But tell this Turk he is a scurvey knave!

SCAPIN, *still holding out his hand.*
Yes.

GERONTE, *same game.*
An untrustworthy lout, a thief!

SCAPIN
Yes.

GERONTE, *same game.*
A venal seaborne pustule!

SCAPIN
Let me take care of that.

GERONTE, *same game.*
That I would not give this sum to him for life or death.

SCAPIN
Very well.

GERONTE
And that, if I ever catch him, I will not lack means to exact my revenge.

SCAPIN
Yes.

GERONTE, *places the purse in his pocket and goes.*
Go, go quickly and free my son!

SCAPIN, *going after him.*
Wait! Sir!

GERONTE
Yes?

SCAPIN
The money?

GERONTE
Didn't I give it to you?

SCAPIN

No, truly, you put it back into your pocket.

GERONTE

Ah! The dark tragedy of it all clouds my mind!

SCAPIN

So it would seem.

GERONTE

Why did he get on that boat! Ah, cursed boat! May all the devils from here to pandemonium drown that scurvy Turk!

SCAPIN, *alone*.

He can't stomach the five hundred écus that I've just gotten from him; but we're not even yet, and I'll pay him in another coin for how he gave his son the wrong idea about me.

SCENE EIGHT

Octave, Leander, Scapin.

OCTAVE

Ah, good! Scapin, have you succeeded on my behalf?

LEANDER

And have you done something to pull my love from her present distress?

SCAPIN, *to Octave*.

Well, here's two hundred pistoles that I've plucked from *your* father.

OCTAVE

Oh! What joy do I not owe to you!

SCAPIN, *to Leander*.

As for you, however, I could do nothing.

LEANDER, *moving to leave*.

Then I must go die; for I have nothing left to live for if my Zerbinette is taken from me.

SCAPIN

Hold on, hold on! Not so fast! God, how hot you run!

LEANDER, *turning around*.

What do you want from me?

SCAPIN

Come on, I've got your money right here.

LEANDER, *coming back*.

Oh, how you've breathed life right back into me again!

SCAPIN

But you'll only get it on one condition: that you let me get some small measure of revenge against your father, for the dirty trick he tried to play on me.

LEANDER

Yes, of course.

SCAPIN

Here, take the five hundred écus.

LEANDER

Let's go quickly to ransom the woman I adore.

ACT III

SCENE ONE

Zerbinette, Hyacinthe, Scapin, Sylvester.

SYLVESTER

Yes, your lovers have decreed that the two of you should be together; and we are now acquitting ourselves of the order they have given us.

HYACINTHE

Nothing could be more agreeable to me than such an order. I receive a companion of this caliber with joy; and see no reason why the friendship between those we love should not flower between us as well.

ZERBINETTE

I, too, welcome the proposal, and am not the sort of person to recoil when attacked out of friendship.

SCAPIN

And when attacked out of love?

ZERBINETTE

Out of love? Well, that's another thing entirely; one runs a little more risk there, and I am not so bold.

SCAPIN

Yet, if I am not mistaken, you are so bold against my master now; and what he's just done for you should give you the courage to respond as you should to his passion.

ZERBINETTE

I still do not trust but in good manner; and what he has just done is not enough to convince me. I have a blithe spirit, and laugh all the time; but even while laughing I am serious about certain things, and your master is fooling himself if he thinks it was enough to ransom me to render me entirely his. It will cost him something other than money; and, to respond to his love in the manner he wishes, I will need a gift of his faith which is seasoned by certain necessary ceremonies.

SCAPIN

That's exactly how he understands it. He does not lay claim to you except in all goodness and honor; and I would never be the man to mix in such an affair if he'd had any other thought.

ZERBINETTE

That is what I would like to believe, since you tell me it is so; but I foresee, on the part of the father, the raising of some grave obstructions.

SCAPIN

We will find ways to accommodate these things.

HYACINTHE, *to Zerbinette.*

The similarity of our destinies should nurture the birth of our friendship; for having both been exposed to the same misfortune, we can each see in the other the reflection of our own turmoils.

ZERBINETTE

You have the advantage, at least, of knowing your birth, and that the strength of your family, if made known, can arrange all, assure your happiness, and procure consent to a marriage already made. But for myself, I find no help in who I might be and my state is not one likely to soften the will of a father who thinks only of riches.

HYACINTHE

But you also have this advantage, that it is not your family or your state that tempts the one that you love.

ZERBINETTE

A lover's quicksilver heart is not what one ought to fear the most. One might by nature naturally believe oneself to have enough merit to keep a conquest; but what I see most formidable in these affairs is the power of the father, besides which all merit is as good as nothing.

HYACINTHE

Alas! Why must noble inclinations find themselves so crossed! A sweet thing it is to love, when one encounters no obstacles to the entwining of these loving chains by which two hearts link themselves together!

SCAPIN

Surely, you are joking. Tranquility in love is a stagnant calm; and total happiness begins to bore; you need both the high and the low in life, and it is difficulties mixed into things that awaken ardor and augment pleasure.

ZERBINETTE

Please, Scapin, do tell us the story (which I've heard is so funny) of the wile you used to extract money from your master's miserly father. You know your trouble is never wasted in telling me a story, for I repay it by the joy that takes me when I hear it.

SCAPIN

Here's Sylvester who can acquit himself as well as I. Right now I am brewing up a certain small vengeance of which I plan to taste the full measure.

SYLVESTER

Why, Scapin, must you disrupt this joyous moment just to nurse your vicious grudge?

SCAPIN

Because it pleases me to embark on hazardous enterprises.

SYLVESTER

But you would drop your plan, if you would believe me.

SCAPIN

Yes, but it's *me* that I believe.

SYLVESTER

And just how are you going to avenge yourself?

SCAPIN

What do you care?

SYLVESTER

I guess I don't. But I do see that for no particularly good reason you're going to run the risk of a good beating.

SCAPIN

Yes, but it's my back that will pay the price, not yours.

SYLVESTER

Yes, it's true that you are the master of your shoulders, and you will dispose of them as you please.

SCAPIN

Such petty risks have never stopped me; and I despise those weak hearts which, in anticipating dire outcomes, don't dare do anything.

ZERBINETTE, *to Scapin.*

We do have need of your help.

SCAPIN

Go ahead. I will catch up shortly. But no one will say with impunity that I had betrayed myself, or that I ever gave loose lips to secrets entrusted to me.

SCENE TWO

Geronte, Scapin.

GERONTE

Ah, good, Scapin. How is my son's affair turning out?

SCAPIN

Your son, Sir, is in a safe place; but now I fear you are the one in great danger, and I really wish you were safe at home.

GERONTE

Why? What's the matter?

SCAPIN

Even as we speak, they are on searching for you so they can kill you.

GERONTE

Me?

SCAPIN

Yes.

GERONTE

But who?

SCAPIN

The brother of the girl Octave married, along with all his cronies. He believes that the biggest reason for your wanting to break the marriage was your design to replace his sister with your daughter; and, with this thought, he has resolved to vent his despair on you and take your life to satisfy his honor. All his friends, likewise men of the sword, are seeking you out everywhere,

and asking where you are. Soldiers from his company are interrogating everyone they meet, and have planted themselves in squads on all roads to your house. In fact, they've covered the routes so thoroughly that you cannot go home, or even left or right, without falling into their hands.

GERONTE

What will I do, my poor Scapin?

SCAPIN

I don't know, for it's a daunting business. I tremble for you from head to foot, and ... Wait (*He turns and peers toward the end of the stage, appearing to see if someone is there or not.*)

GERONTE, *trembling.*

Eh?

SCAPIN, *coming back.*

No, no, it's nothing.

GERONTE

Can't you think of some way to ferry me out of this danger?

SCAPIN

There is one way, perhaps; but I will run the risk of getting myself beaten up.

GERONTE

Oh! Scapin, prove to me that you're a devoted servant; I beg of you not to abandon me.

SCAPIN

I really want to prove my zeal. My feelings for you are such that I could not leave you in the lurch.

GERONTE

You will be well compensated, I assure you; and I promise to give you the clothes I am wearing right now, once I have worn them a little longer.

SCAPIN

All right, then, here's what I've devised. You must get into this bag, and then ...

GERONTE, *thinking he sees someone.*

Ah!

SCAPIN

No, no, nobody. You must, I say, get inside this bag, and keep yourself from moving in any way. I will put you on my back, like a bag of potatoes, and carry you thus, right in front of your enemies; right to your house, where, once we have arrived, we can barricade ourselves and defend ourselves against their violence.

GERONTE
How clever!

SCAPIN
Indeed! You shall see just how clever. (*Aside.*) You will pay for your trickery.

GERONTE
Eh?

SCAPIN
I said that your enemies will be well-fooled. Now get right down to the bottom of the bag, and be careful not to peek out or move in the least, no matter what happens.

GERONTE
Don't worry. I can keep still as any potato.

SCAPIN
Hide now, quickly: here comes one blade looking for you now. (*Imitating the soldier's voice.*) "What, will I not be the one to kill this Geronte, and will no one tell me out of kindness where he is?" (*To Geronte, in his normal voice*) Don't move. (*Resuming his imitation.*) "I will find him if even if he hides himself in the bowels of the earth!" (*To Geronte, in his normal voice.*) Don't show yourself. (*Scapin delivers all lines in quotes in the imitated voice, and the rest, in his normal voice.*) "Oh, man with a bag!" Sir. "I'll give you a coin, if you can tell me where the man named Geronte is to be found." You're looking for lord Geronte? "Yes, by God, I am looking for him and how!" And why, Sir? "For what?" Yes. "I would kill him with my baton!" Oh, Sir, one does not wail on men like lord Geronte with a stick, for he is not a man to be treated in such a way. "What! That doddering imbecile of a swine Geronte!" Lord Geronte, Sir, is neither a doddering, nor an imbecile, and you shall, if you please, take another tone. "What! You dare to tell me how I should speak!?" I am merely standing up, as I should, for a man of honor that you have so impudently insulted. "What! Are you a friend of this Geronte's?" Yes, Sir, I am. "Ah! You are one of his friends! Well, I am as glad to meet you as beat you!" (*He hits the bag with his stick several times.*) "I'll show you what this lord Geronte is worth!" Ah, ah! Ah, Sir! Easy! Easy! Let up! Ah, ah! "Go, take that message to Geronte for me!" (*He moans and writhes as though his back had received the stick blows.*)

GERONTE, *sticking his head out of the sack.*
Ah, Scapin, I cannot take any more.

SCAPIN
Ah, Sir, I am black and blue, and my shoulders are in terrible agony.

GERONTE
What are you talking about? He was hitting my shoulders, not yours!

SCAPIN
No, Sir, not at all. He was beating on my back.

GERONTE

He was not! I felt each blow and I feel them still.

SCAPIN

No, I tell you, it was just the tail end of the blows that unfortunately slid down to your shoulders.

GERONTE

Then you shall move off a little farther, to spare me this ...

SCAPIN, *Putting Geronte's head back in the bag.* Look out. Here comes another one. (*Again, the language in quotes, delivered in a mimicked voice, alternates with Scapin's regular voice.*) "By God, make me run like a Basque, and I still can't find this devil Geronte!" (*To Geronte, in his normal voice.*) Stay hidden. "Tell me, you, Sir, man, if you please, if you can tell me where I can find this Geronte that I'm looking for?" No, Sir, I don't know where Geronte is. "I tell you, truly, I've got a score to settle with him – about a dozen blows on the back, and maybe three or four little sword slashes across his chest." I assure you, Sir, that I have no idea. "It seems to me I just saw something jiggle in your sack." Excuse me, Sir? "There's surely something going on in there." Not at all, Sir. "Me, I feel like jabbing my sword right into your bag right there." Please, Sir, restrain yourself. "Then show me what you've got there, I say!" Stop – easy, Sir. "What, easy?" You've got no business wanting to see what I'm carting. "But I want to see it." You shall not see it. "Ah, your words are wasted breath!" The contents belong to me. "Show me, I tell you!" I will not. "You won't?" No. "Then I will thrash you with this stick!" Ha! "Oh, so you think the threat is funny? I'll show you just how funny it is!" (*Beating on the bag and crying as if receiving the blows.*) Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah, Sir, ah! Ah! Ah! "Take that until the next time. Let that be a lesson to you to speak insolently!" Ah, plague take the lout!

GERONTE, *poking his head out of the bag.*

Ah! My bones are broken!

SCAPIN

Ah! And I am dead!

GERONTE

But why do they keep hitting me?

SCAPIN, *shoving Geronte's head back into the sack.*

Look out! Here comes a whole platoon at once. (*Scapin imitates several people.*) "Come on, let's find this Geronte. Look under every rock. Spare no pains! Rifle the whole village. Don't leave out any place. Go to every house. Ferret out every cellar. Where to? Where to? Turn here! No, here! To the left! To the right! No, no! Dead ahead!" (*To Geronte, in his normal voice.*) Keep out of sight. Keep still. "Ah, Comrades! Here's his valet. Come on, wretch, you must tell us where your master is hiding." Eh, Sir, do not mistreat me. "Come on, tell us where he is. Quickly! Out with it! Hey! Now!" Hey, Sirs, gently. (*Geronte slowly pokes his head out of the bag and discovers Scapin's trickery.*) "If you don't reveal your master's whereabouts right now, we'll drown you with a deluge of blows." I would suffer anything rather than tell

you where my master is. “We’re going to thump you well!” Do as you please. “You want to be beaten up?” I will not betray my master. “Ah, you want a taste of this wood, is that it? Here! ...” Oh! (*As Scapin prepares to strike, Geronte emerges from the bag, and Scapin runs away.*)

GERONTE

Ah, wretch! Traitor! Ah, Rogue! So this is the way you kill me!

SCENE THREE

Zerbinette, Geronte.

ZERBINETTE, *laughing, without seeing Geronte.*

I need to take a little fresh air.

GERONTE, *believing himself alone.*

You will pay for it, I swear!

ZERBINETTE, *without seeing Geronte, laughing.*

A funny story. Ah, what a born dupe that old geezer is!

GERONTE

There’s nothing so funny about it, and you have no business laughing.

ZERBINETTE

What? What are saying, Sir?

GERONTE

I am saying that you have no right to laugh at me.

ZERBINETTE

At you?

GERONTE

Yes.

ZERBINETTE

But who would take it into his head to laugh at you?

GERONTE

Why have you come here just to laugh in my face?

ZERBINETTE

It has nothing to do with you, and I was laughing all by myself at a story someone just told me; the funniest story that you could ever hear. I don’t know if it’s because I had a part in the thing, but I’ve never heard of such a neat trick played on a father by a son for squeezing out some money.

GERONTE

By a son on a father, you say, for squeezing out some money?

ZERBINETTE

Yes. And you will find me eager enough to tell you about it if you like, for I am always itching to tell the stories I know.

GERONTE

I beg you, do tell me the story.

ZERBINETTE

Oh, I'd love to. I don't risk much in telling it to you, since it won't be kept secret for long. Destiny had fated me to find myself among a band of people they call Gypsies, and who, roaming from province to province, engage in fortune telling, and a good many other things. In arriving at this city, a young man saw me and conceived a great love for me. Ever since that moment, he haunted my steps, and of course! like all young men, who believe they have only to speak, and at the least word they say to us, they think their case is made; but he discovered a pride which set his first thoughts straight. He made his passion known to the men who held me, and he found them disposed to let me go to him, by means of a certain sum. But the misfortune of the affair was that the young man found himself in the state where one often finds the greater part of the sons of good family; that is to say, he was a little bereft of money, and he has a father, who, although rich, is a miserly hoarder, the vilest man in the world. Now wait a moment, what was his name? I think I can remember. Ah! Oh, help me a little. Can't you name for me, someone of this city who is known for being the last word in stinginess?

GERONTE

No. I know no such man.

ZERBINETTE

It sounds like ... Er onte. Or ... nante. No. Ge ... Geronte! Yes! That's it! There's my wretch - the cheapskate I mean. To get back to the story, our Gypsies were going to leave the city today; and my lover would have lost me for want of money, if he had not found the ingenious help of one of his servants in getting it from his father. As for the servant, I know him very well; his name is Scapin; and he's an incomparable man, and merits all the praise one can give.

GERONTE, *aside*.

Ah! Wretch that you are!

ZERBINETTE

So here's the stratagem he used for fooling the dupe. I can't even think of it without laughing with all my heart. (*Laughs, and does so intermittently throughout the story.*) He went to find the dog of a miser and told him that while he was walking along the harbor with his son, they had seen a Turkish Galley which they were invited to board; that a young Turk had given them a meal, and that, while they were eating, the Galley had put to sea, and that the Turk had sent him

back alone on a skiff, with the order to tell his master's father that he would take his son to Algiers, if he did not send him five hundred écus right away. The five hundred écus they demanded of him were just like giving him five hundred punches, for his fury and the tenderness that he felt for his son engaged in a fierce combat with his stinginess. He could not resolve to pull this amount from his innards; his acute pain sent him in search of a hundred ridiculous ways to ransom his son. He wanted to send a judge to sea after the Turkish Galley. He asked the valet to go offer himself up in the place of his son, until he could gather the ransom-money. He wanted to yield up, to equal the five hundred écus, four or five threadbare outfits that weren't worth thirty. The valet made him understand, on all sides, the futility of these propositions, and his every third word was, "But why did he get on that cursed boat! Ah, miserable boat! Traitorous Turk!" Finally, after several detours, and much moaning and sighing ... But ... it seems you are not laughing at my tale. What do you have to say about it?

GERONTE

I'd say that the young man is a lout, an insolent, who will be punished by his father for the trick he played; that the Gypsy girl was an ill-advised upstart to say such insulting things about a man of honor who will know how to teach her to come here and debauch the sons of good families; and that the valet is a scurvy wretch who will be sent to the gallows by Geronte before this very day is over.

SCENE FOUR

Silvester, Zerbinette.

SYLVESTER

What are you going to do now? Don't you know that you were just speaking to your lover's father?

ZERBINETTE

I was just starting to wonder if I wasn't talking to him without realizing it, while I was telling him the story.

SYLVESTER

What do you mean? What story?

ZERBINETTE

Well, I was still full of the story of the false ransom and was just burning to tell it. But what does it matter? All the worse for him. I don't see how things are any worse or better for it.

SYLVESTER

You really do like to babble, you do; and to have a good tongue is to be able to stop it when it comes to our own affairs.

ZERBINETTE

But wouldn't he have learned it just as well from someone else?

SCENE FIVE

Argante, Sylvester.

ARGANTE

Ho! Sylvester!

SYLVESTER, *to Zerbinette.*

Go back to the house. That's my master calling me!

ARGANTE

You all conspired, knave, you all conspired, Scapin and you and my son, to trick me, and you think I can tolerate that?

SYLVESTER

My word, Sir, if Scapin is a trickster, I wash my hands of it, and I assure you I'm not tarred by this brush in any way.

ARGANTE

We'll find out, lout, we'll find out, and no one can brag of slipping the ox-ring through my nose.

SCENE SIX

Geronte, Argante, Sylvester.

GERONTE

Ah, lord Argante, I have lost all face!

ARGANTE

You find me also horribly dishonored.

GERONTE

The rascal Scapin, by a ruse, has cheated me of five hundred écus.

ARGANTE

The same lout Scapin, by another trick, has cheated me of two hundred pistoles.

GERONTE

And not only did he take me for five hundred écus, but he treated me in such a disgraceful way that I am ashamed to admit to it. But he will pay for it.

ARGANTE

I want him to tell me why he pulled this stunt.

GERONTE

And I intend to make him an example of true justice.

SYLVESTER, *aside*.

Thank Heavens I had nothing to do with all this!

GERONTE

But that is not yet all, lord Argante, and one misery is always the forerunner of another. I was rejoicing today in the hope of seeing my daughter, who is all my consolation; and I've just learned that she left Tarente a long time ago, and that she has perished with the boat.

ARGANTE

But why, if you please, did you keep her in Tarente, and not give yourself the joy of having her with you here?

GERONTE

I had my reasons, and some family interests obliged me until just now to keep my second marriage secret. But what is this I see?

SCENE SEVEN

Nerine, Argante, Geronte, Sylvester.

GERONTE

Ah, it's you, Nurse?

NERINE, *throwing herself at his knees*.

Ah! Lord Pandolphe, please let ...

GERONTE

Use that name no longer, and call me Geronte. The reasons that obliged me to take it among you in Tarente are gone now.

NERINE

Oh, now! Now, it's all right! If you only knew what problems and anxieties that name caused us in the efforts to come and look for you here!

GERONTE

But where is my daughter, and her mother?

NERINE

Your daughter, Sir, is not far from here. But before letting you see her, I must beg your pardon for letting her marry, in the state of abandonment, which, not finding you here, we believed to have found ourselves.

GERONTE
My daughter, married!

NERINE
Yes, Sir.

GERONTE
And with whom might I ask?

NERINE
With a young man named Octave, son of a certain lord Argante.

GERONTE
Oh, Heavens!

ARGANTE
What chance!

GERONTE
Take us, take us quickly, to where she's staying.

NERINE
You have only to enter this house.

GERONTE
You go before. Follow me, follow me, lord Argante.

SYLVESTER
Here's an outcome which was totally unexpected!

SCENE EIGHT
Scapin, Sylvester.

SCAPIN
Hey! Sylvester, what are our masters up to?

SYLVESTER
I have two tidbits for you. One, Octave's marriage is all settled for the good. It turns out that our Hyacinthe is lord Geronte's daughter, and chance has accomplished what the fathers had only planned. The other item is that the two old men are making strong threats against you, especially lord Geronte.

SCAPIN
Ah, not to worry. Threats have never hurt me; they are but clouds that pass over my head.

SYLVESTER

But you should still watch out. The sons might be back in good with the fathers, but you are still in deep –

SCAPIN

Leave it to me. I will find a way to salve their wrath, and ...

SYLVESTER

Leave quickly – they're coming out.

SCENE NINE

Geronte, Argante, Sylvester, Nerine, Hyacinthe.

GERONTE

Come, my daughter, come to my house. My joy would have been perfect, if only I could have seen your mother with you.

ARGANTE

Here's Octave, just in time.

SCENE TEN

Octave, Argante, Geronte, Hyacinthe, Nerine, Zerbinette, Sylvester.

ARGANTE

Come, my son, rejoice with us over the happy event of your marriage. Heaven...

OCTAVE, *without seeing Hyacinthe.*

No, my father, all your proposals of marriage are futile. I would drop this charade ...

ARGANTE

Yes, but you do not know ...

OCTAVE

I know all I need to know.

ARGANTE

I want to tell you that the daughter of lord Geronte ...

OCTAVE

Lord Geronte's daughter will never mean anything to me.

GERONTE

She is ...

OCTAVE, *to Geronte.*

No, Sir; begging your pardon, but my resolutions ...

ARGANTE, *to Octave.*

Your wife ...

OCTAVE

No, I tell you, my father, I would rather die than abandon my adorable Hyacinthe. (*Crossing the stage towards her.*) Yes, your efforts are in vain, here she is, she to whom my faith is eternally engaged; I will love her all my life, and I don't want any other wife ...

ARGANTE

Eh, good thing, too! It's her that we're giving you as a wife. What a stubborn ass, always tethered to some fixed notion.

HYACINTHE, *gesturing to Geronte.*

Yes, Octave, I have found my father, and it turns out that we have safely escaped the shoals.

GERONTE

Let's move along to my house; for we will be more comfortable there and can better talk.

HYACINTHE, *gesturing to Zerbinette.*

Ah, my father, I demand of you by your grace that you do not separate me from this beloved person that you see here; for she has a merit that will make you conceive some esteem for her, once you get to know her.

GERONTE

Once I get to know her? You would have me take into my household a woman who is loved by your brother, and who has just told me to my face a thousand idiocies about myself?

ZERBINETTE

Sir, I beg you to excuse me. I would not have spoken in this way, if I had known that it was you, for I only knew you by reputation.

GERONTE

What, by reputation?

HYACINTHE

My father, my brother's passion for her has nothing criminal about it, and I answer for her virtue.

GERONTE

Well, of course. Who wouldn't want her to marry my son? An unknown girl, a vagabond!

SCENE ELEVEN

Leander, Octave, Hyacinthe, Zerbinette, Argante, Geronte, Sylvester, Nerine.

LEANDER

My father, do not complain because I love an unknown of no birth and without money. Those from whom I've ransomed her informed me that she is from this city, of a respectable family, and that it was they who had taken her away at the age of four; and here's a bracelet they handed to me, which can help us find her parents.

ARGANTE

This bracelet!? Ah! Then she must be my daughter that I lost at the age that you've said.

GERONTE

Your daughter?

ARGANTE

Yes, it is, and here are exactly the features that render it incontestable!

HYACINTHE

Oh, Heavens! What extraordinary events!

SCENE TWELVE

Carle, Leander, Octave, Geronte, Argante, Hyacinthe, Zerbinette, Sylvester, Nerine.

CARLE

Ah, Sirs! Something horrible has just happened.

GERONTE

What?

CARLE

Poor Scapin.

GERONTE

He's a wretch that I will have had hung by daybreak.

CARLE

Alas! Sir! You won't need to take the trouble. In walking past a building a hammer the size of a boulder fell on his head, broke his skull open, and exposed half his brain. He's dying, and he's begged them to carry him here to speak to you before he dies.

ARGANTE

Where is he?

CARLE

Here he comes now.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Scapin, Carle, Geronte, Argante, etc.

SCAPIN, *carried by two men, his head wrapped in bandages.*

Woe! Woe! Oh! Oh! Sirs, here I am ... Oh, you see me in a woeful state! Oh! But I did not want to die without coming first to ask pardon for all the people here that I might have offended. Woe! Yes, Sirs, before giving up my last sigh, I beg with all my heart that you pardon me for all that I might have done to you, but especially lord Argante and my lord Geronte. Oh!

ARGANTE

For myself, I pardon you; go, die in peace.

SCAPIN, *to Geronte.*

It is you, Sir, that I have most offended, by the blows with the stick ...

GERONTE

Say no more; I also pardon you.

SCAPIN

It was a superlative boldness on my part, that I dared to strike you with a stick ...

GERONTE

Enough. Let's leave the subject.

SCAPIN

I have, in dying, conceived an inconceivable regret from the thwacks with that stick ...

GERONTE

My God, shut up!

SCAPIN

The unfortunate thumps that I delivered to your back and shoulders ...

GERONTE

Hush, I say; I've forgotten all about it.

SCAPIN

Alas! What generosity! But does it come from a genuine and good heart, Sir? Your forgiveness for those hard knocks with that stick?

GERONTE

Why, yes! Let's speak no more of it; I pardon you all, there – it's done.

SCAPIN

Ah! Well, Sir! At hearing these words I feel myself getting much better.

GERONTE

Yes; but I only pardon you on condition that you die now.

SCAPIN

What, Sir?

GERONTE

I will take back my word if you survive your accident.

SCAPIN

Oh! Oh! How my weakness again seizes me!

ARGANTE

Lord Geronte, in light of our newfound joy, your pardon must be unconditional.

GERONTE

All right. So be it.

ARGANTE

Let's go and dine together to better savor our happiness.

SCAPIN

And as for me, let them carry me to the end of the table, where I may eat my fill while waiting to die.