

George Dandin (1668)

Resume

Act I

George Dandin, a rich peasant, has reason to be displeased with his marriage to Angélique, a young woman of noble birth. He learns from Lubin, a talkative fool, that Angélique has agreed secretly to meet Clitandre, a nobleman who lives nearby. Dandin decides to complain to his wife's parents. The Sotenvilles may treat him with little respect, but they will not suffer loose behaviour on the part of their daughter. However, when Clitandre and Angélique, supported by her maid, deny any wrongdoing, the Sotenvilles believe them rather than George, and he is forced to apologise to Clitandre for having falsely accused him.

Act II

Lubin, who has just delivered a second message for Angélique, finds Claudine to his taste, but she does not seem to return his feelings. While Clitandre secretly tries to speak to Angélique, George lectures her on the duties of a wife, but she tells him that since she was married against her will, she has no intention of sacrificing her youth to him.

While Angélique is in the house answering Clitandre's note, Claudine lets him in. Lubin, unaware that George Dandin is the unfortunate husband, informs him of the past developments. Again George complains to the Sotenvilles; he will give them proof of their daughter's misbehaviour. Claudine, who has spotted the three spies, warns the lovers. In a speech laden with double meaning, Angélique feigns indignation at Clitandre's advances. Not only is George again thwarted in his efforts to preserve his honour, but he also receives the blows supposedly meant to punish Clitandre.

Act III

It is night-time. Clitandre and Lubin are waiting for Angélique and Claudine to come out of the house. In the dark there is some confusion, and as George, who has heard his wife come downstairs follows her, Lubin mistakes him for Claudine and informs him that Angélique has a date with Clitandre. George frantically sends for the Sotenvilles and locks himself in the house. When he refuses to let her in, Angélique pretends to stab herself. Somewhat worried, George goes out to investigate. Now Angélique and Claudine rush in to the house and lock George out. When her parents arrive, Angélique accuses George of drinking the night away. Poor George is forced to beg for forgiveness on his knees. George tells himself at the end that the only course of action left to him now is to go and throw himself in the river.