

Le Médecin malgré lui (1666)

Act I

Martine angrily reproaches her woodcutter husband for his drunkenness and laziness. Exasperated by her insults, Sganarelle begins to beat her. Monsieur Robert, who comes to her rescue, soon learns he should have minded his own business. Though she pretends to forgive Sganarelle, Martine swears to avenge herself. She finds an opportunity to do so when she meets Valère and Lucas. They are looking for a doctor able to cure their master's daughter who has lost the power of speech. Martine tells them Sganarelle is a very learned doctor who poses as a woodcutter and will only confess to his true profession after a thorough thrashing. When they find the cowardly Sganarelle, Valère and Lucas have no trouble persuading him he is indeed a doctor.

Act II

Valère and Lucas are singing the would-be-doctor's praises to Géronte, their master, but Jacqueline, the nurse, thinks the best cure for Lucinde would be to give her to Léandre, the man of her choosing, instead of forcing her to marry Horace just because he is rich. Sganarelle enters and starts hitting Géronte, saying that this was the way one earned a degree. He finds Jacqueline to his taste, arousing the jealousy of her stupid husband, Lucas. Lucinde is brought in and after a scene in which Sganarelle betrays a rather fanciful knowledge of the human anatomy — he was once a doctor's servant — he prescribes bread and wine as a treatment. When Géronte gives him a purse, Sganarelle is delighted with his new profession. Enter Léandre who comes to enlist the "doctor's" help and who reveals that Lucinde's illness was feigned in order to delay the marriage to the hated Horace.

Act III

Léandre is now disguised as an apothecary who works with Sganarelle. The latter's reputation is becoming widespread and peasants come to consult him. He is free with his quack remedies provided they are free with their money. A flirtation scene between Jacqueline and Sganarelle is interrupted by Lucas' unexpected arrival. When Lucinde is brought in, Sganarelle tries to distract Géronte's attention to give the disguised Léandre an opportunity to "feel her pulse". Lucinde suddenly starts to speak, but only to tell her father that she will marry no one but Léandre. Sganarelle sends Léandre out with her and with veiled words advises flight. Lucas soon comes in to announce that the lovers have fled and that the "doctor" has engineered their flight. For this, Sganarelle must hang. Martine arrives, not knowing whether to rejoice or weep at the news. But Léandre and Lucinde, stricken with remorse, come back to the house. Happily, now that Léandre has become wealthy thanks to his uncle's untimely death, Géronte is now content to give him Lucinde. Sganarelle is free and warns Martine that, as the wife of a famous man, she will have to tread the straight and narrow ...