**Scapin’s Deceits  
(Les Fourberies de Scapin)**

**by Molière  
(1671)**

**ARGANTE**, father of OCTAVE and ZERBINETTE.

**GERONTE**, father of LEANDRE and HYACINTHE.

**OCTAVE**, son of ARGANTE, and lover of HYACINTHE.

**LEANDRE**, son of GERONTE, and lover of ZERBINETTE.

**ZERBINETTE**, daughter of ARGANTE, believed to be an Egyptian

**HYACINTHE**, daughter of GERONTE.

**SCAPIN**, servant to LEANDRE.

**SILVESTRE**, servant to OCTAVE.

**NERINE**, nurse to HYACINTHE.

**CARLE**.

**TWO PORTERS**.

*The scene is at NAPLES.*

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**ACT I.**

Act I SCENE I — OCTAVE, SILVESTRE.

**OCT.** Oh! what unwelcome news for one in love! What terrible problems for me! So, Silvestre, you have just learned at the harbour that my father is coming back?

**SIL.** Yes.

**OCT.** That he’s arriving this very morning?

**SIL.** This very morning.

**OCT.** That he’s coming back to marry me off?

**SIL.** To marry you off.

**OCT.** To a daughter of Mr. Geronte?

**SIL.** Of Mr. Geronte.

**OCT.** And this daughter is on her way from Tarente for that?

**SIL.** Yes.

**OCT.** And this news comes from my uncle?

**SIL.** From your uncle.

**OCT.** Who has been informed by my father?

**SIL.** In a letter.

**OCT.** And this uncle, you say, knows all our business?

**SIL.** All our business

**OCT.** Oh! talk for heaven’s sake! Don’t force me to pull every word from your mouth.

**SIL.** But what is the point of saying more? You forget nothing and tell it exactly as it is.

**OCT.** At least help me, and tell me what I should do in these wretched circumstances.

**SIL.** Good grief! I’m as much at a loss as you, and I need help, too.

**OCT.** This damned return kills me.

**SIL.** And me.

**OCT.** When my father hears what has happened, he’s going to heap reprimands on me.

**SIL.** Reprimands are nothing; I wish to heaven that I could get off that easily! But I am very likely to pay dearly for all your crazy doings, and I see a heap of blows ready to crash down on my shoulders.

**OCT.** Heavens! How do I get out of this situation I’m in?

**SIL.** You should have thought of that before throwing yourself into it.

**OCT.** Oh, you’re killing me with your unseasonable preaching.

**SIL.** You’re killing me much more with your scatter-brained actions.

**OCT.** What should I do? What steps should I take? What solution should I turn to?

Act I SCENE II — OCTAVE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**SCA.** What is it, Mr. Octave? What is the matter? What mess are you in? I see you’re all upset.

**OCT.** Oh! my dear Scapin, I am lost; I am in despair I am the most unfortunate of men.

**SCA.** Why?

**OCT.** Have you heard nothing about what has happened to me?

**SCA.** No.

**OCT.** My father is arriving with Mr. Geronte, and they want to marry me off.

**SCA.** Well, what is so dreadful about that?

**OCT.** Alas! you don’t know the cause of my anxiety.

**SCA.** No; but tell me and I’ll know; and I am a sympathetic man, a man who is interested in the troubles of young people.

**OCT.** Ah! Scapin, if you could find some scheme, invent some plot, to get me out of the trouble I am in, I would be indebted to you for more than life.

**SCA.** To tell you the truth, few things are impossible to me once I set about tackling them. Heaven has undoubtedly given me enough genius for creating those neat strokes of wit, all those ingenious flatteries which the ignorant call dishonesty; and I can boast, without vanity, that one has rarely seen a more skilful plotter or one who has acquired greater fame in this noble profession. But really! merit is ill rewarded these days, and I have given up this kind of work after some trouble I had with a certain matter.

**OCT.** How? What matter, Scapin?

**SCA.** An event in which the law and I had a falling out.

**OCT.** You and the law?

**SCA.** Yes. I was used very badly; and I felt so annoyed by the ingratitude of our age that I swore never to do anything again. Enough. All the same, do tell me about your adventure.

**OCT.** You know, Scapin, that two months ago Mr. Geronte and my father set out together on a trip for some business they have together.

**SCA.** I know that.

**OCT.** And that both Leandre and I were left by our fathers, I under the care of Silvestre, and Leandre under your care.

**SCA.** Yes, I have done my job well.

**OCT.** Some time after, Leandre met a young Egyptian girl and fell in love.

**SCA.** I know that, too.

**OCT.** As we are great friends, he told me at once of his love, and took me to see this young girl, whom I did find beautiful but not as beautiful as he wanted me to find her. He spoke only of her every day; he exaggerated her beauty and her eloquence, boasted of her intelligence, spoke to me with rapture of her charming conversation, and relayed to me her most meaningless comments, which he wanted me to think the cleverest thing in the world. He often argued with me for not being sensitive enough to the things he had told me, and blamed me endlessly for being so insensitive to the flames of love.

**SCA.** I do not see where you’re going with all this.

**OCT.** One day, as I was going with him to the people who have charge of the girl he loves, we heard, in a little house on a remote street, moans mixed with a good deal of sobbing. We asked what it was, and were told by a woman that we might see there two strangers who presented a most pitiful sight, and that unless we were quite insensitive, we would surely be touched by it.

**SCA.** Where is this leading us?

**OCT.** Curiosity made me urge Leandre to see what it was. We went into a room, where we saw an old woman dying, and with her a servant who lamenting, and a young girl dissolved in tears, the most beautiful, the most touching that you ever saw.

**SCA.** Oh! oh!

**OCT.** Any other woman would have seemed frightful in the state she was in, for all she was wearing was an ugly old petticoat, with a plain fustian night shirt; at the top of her head was a cone-shaped yellow cap, which let her hair fall messily on her shoulders; and yet, dressed even thus she was striking, and her person was all charm and beauty.

**SCA.** I see what’s coming.

**OCT.** If you had seen her, Scapin, as I did, you would have found her admirable.

**SCA.** Oh! I have no doubt about it; and without having seen her, I see that she must have been altogether charming.

**OCT.** Her tears were not those unpleasant tears that spoil a face; crying, she had a most touching grace, and her sorrow was the most beautiful in the world.

**SCA.** I can see all that.

**OCT.** Everyone burst into tears as she threw herself lovingly on the dying woman, whom she called her dear mother; and nobody could help but be deeply moved to see a girl with such a loving nature.

**SCA.** Yes, all that is very touching; and I understand that this loving nature made you love her.

**OCT.** Oh! Scapin, a barbarian would have loved her.

**SCA.** Of course, how could anyone prevent it?

**OCT.** After a few words to try to soothe her grief, we left her; and when I asked Leandre what he thought of her, he answered coldly that she was rather pretty! I was hurt by the coldness with which he spoke to me of her, and I did not reveal to him the impact her beauty had had on my heart.

**SIL.** If you do not shorten this story, we’ll be here until tomorrow. Leave it to me to finish it in a few words.

His heart is on fire from that moment. He can’t live without comforting the sorrowful girl. His frequent visits are forbidden by the servant, who, with the death of the mother, has become the girl’s guardian. Our young man is in despair; he presses, begs, pleads—all in vain. He is told that the young girl, though without friends and fortune, is of an honourable family, and that, unless he marries her, his visits won’t be tolerated. These difficulties increase his love. He racks his brains, debates, reasons, ponders, and makes up his mind. And here he is - he has been married to her for three days.

**SCA.** I see.

**SIL.** Now, add to this the unexpected return of the father, who was not supposed to be back for two whole months; the discovery the uncle has made of the marriage; and that other marriage planned between him and the daughter Mr. Geronte had by a second wife, whom, they say, he married at Taranto.

**OCT.** And above all this, add also the poverty of my beloved, and the impossibility for me to do anything to help her.

**SCA.** Is that all? You are both at a great loss about nothing. Is there any reason to be alarmed? Are you not ashamed to fall short in such a small matter? Heavens! Here you are, big and stout as father and mother put together, and you can’t find in your head any ruse, some honest little strategy, to put matters right? Fie! A curse on you! I wish I had had the two old fellows to dupe; I would have cheated them both before I was this big and I had given a hundred proofs of my skill.

**SIL.** I grant you that Heaven has not given me your talent, and I don’t have brains like you to fall out with the law.

**OCT.** Here is my lovely Hyacinthe!

Act I SCENE III — HYACINTHE, OCTAVE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**HYA.** Oh! Octave, is what Silvestre has just told Nerine really true? Is your father back, and does he want to marry you off?

**OCT.** Yes, dear Hyacinthe and this news has been a cruel shock. But what do I see? You are crying? Why those tears? Do you suspect me of some unfaithfulness, and are you not sure in the love I feel for you?

**HYA.** Yes, Octave, I am sure that you love me now; but I’m not sure that you will love me always.

**OCT.** Ah! could one love you without loving you for ever?

**HYA.** I have heard, Octave, that your sex does not love as long as ours, and that the love men show is a fire which dies out as easily as it is kindled.

**OCT.** Then, my dear Hyacinthe, my heart is not like that of other men, and I’m certain that I shall love you to my grave.

**HYA.** I want to believe what you say, and I have no doubt that you are sincere; but I fear a power that will battle in your heart the tender feelings you have for me. You depend on a father who wants you to marry another, and I am sure I should die if I should have such a misfortune.

**OCT.** No, lovely Hyacinthe, there is no father who can force me to be unfaithful to you, and I would resolve to leave my country, and even to die if necessary, rather than be separated from you. Without having seen her, I already have a horrible aversion to the woman he has chosen; and without being cruel, I wish the sea would take her away forever. Don’t cry, then, dear Hyacinthe, for your tears kill me, and I can’t see them without feeling pierced to the heart.

**HYA.** Since you wish it, I’ll dry my tears, and I’ll wait without fear for what Heaven has in store for me.

**OCT.** Heaven will be good to us.

**HYA.** It can’t be against me if you are faithful.

**OCT.** I will certainly be faithful.

**HYA.** Then I’ll be happy.

**SCA** She is not so silly, after all, and I find her pretty enough.

**OCT.** Here is a man who, if he would, could be of the greatest help to us in our time of need.

**SCA.** I have sworn never more to meddle with people. But if you both entreat me very much, I might…

**OCT.** Ah! if entreaties will get your help, I beg you with all my heart to steer our boat.

**SCA.** And you, have you nothing to say?

**HYA.** I beseech you, as he does, by everything that is most dear to you on earth, to help us in our love.

**SCA.** I must give in and have a little humanity. I will do all I can for you.

**OCT.** Do you think…

**SCA.** Hush! Go, and don’t worry.

Act I SCENE IV — OCTAVE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**SCA.** And you, prepare yourself to receive your father with firmness.

**OCT.** I confess that this meeting frightens me; I have a natural shyness that I cannot conquer.

**SCA.** And yet, you must appear firm from the first, or he may take advantage of your weakness, and lead you like a child. Now, come, try to train yourself, and be ready to answer boldly all he may say to you.

**OCT.** I’ll do the best I can.

**SCA.** Come! Let’s try a little, just to get used to it. Let us rehearse your part, and see how well you manage. Come, a determined expression, your head high, a bold look.

**OCT.** Like this?

**SCA.** A little more.

**OCT.** Like this?

**SCA.** That will do. Now, imagine that I am your father who has just arrived; answer me boldly as if you were talking to him — “What! you scoundrel, you good-for-nothing, you rascal, unworthy son of such a father as I am, dare you come before me after what you’ve done, and after this cowardly trick you’ve played on me during my absence? Is this the fruit of all my care, you scoundrel? Is this the respect due to me? Is this the respect you have for me?” — Now then, now then. — “You have the audacity, scoundrel, to get yourself engaged without the consent of your father, and enter into a clandestine marriage! Answer me, you villain! Answer me. Let me hear your fine reasons”… — Come on! you seem quite lost.

**OCT.** It is just that I imagine it’s my father speaking.

**SCA.** Why, yes, and that’s the reason why you must try not to behave like an idiot.

**OCT.** I will be more determined, and will answer more firmly.

**SCA.** For certain?

**OCT.** For certain.

**SIL.** Here is your father coming.

**OCT.** Oh heavens! I’m lost.

Act I SCENE V — SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**SCA.** Hey, Octave, stop! Octave! He’s gone. What a poor specimen of manhood! Let’s wait for the old man all the same.

**SIL.** What shall I tell him?

**SCA.** Leave him to me; just follow me.

Act I SCENE VI — ARGANTE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE

**ARG.** Has anyone ever heard of such a debt?

**SCA.** He has already heard of the affair, he’s so preoccupied, he’s talking to himself about it.

**ARG.** What audacity.

**SCA.** Let us listen to him a bit.

**ARG.** I would like to know what they will be able to tell me about this fine marriage.

**SCA.** We have already thought of it.

**ARG.** Will they try to deny it?

**SCA**. No, we wouldn’t think of it.

**ARG.** Or will they try to explain it?

**SCA.** That may be.

**ARG.** Do they intend to deceive me with unlikely stories?

**SCA.** Perhaps.

**ARG.** All their talk will be useless.

**SCA.** We’ll see.

**ARG.** They will not be able to deceive me.

**SCA.** Let’s not swear to that.

**ARG.** I’ll know how to put my rascal of a son in a safe place.

**SCA.** We’ll see about that.

**ARG.** And as for that good for nothing Silvestre, I shall beat him soundly.

**SIL.** I should have been surprised if he had forgotten me.

**ARG.** Oh, oh! there you are, good protector of youth, fine educator of young people!

**SCA.** Sir, I am delighted to see you back.

**ARG.** Good morning, Scapin. you have really followed my orders in a fine manner, and my son has behaved well in my absence.

**SCA.** You are quite well, I see.

**ARG.** Pretty well. You don’t say a word, you rascal, you don’t say a word!

**SCA.** Did you have a pleasant journey?

**ARG.** Yes, yes, very good. Let me scold in peace!

**SCA.** You want to scold?

**ARG.** Yes, I want to scold.

**SCA.** Whom, Sir?

**ARG.** This scoundrel!

**SCA.** Why?

**ARG.** Haven’t you heard of what happened during my absence?

**SCA.** Yes, I ‘ve heard some trifling thing.

**ARG.** What! Some trifling thing! An action of that sort?

**SCA.** You have some right to…

**ARG.** Such daring as that!

**SCA.** That’s quite true.

**ARG.** A son who marries without his father’s consent!

**SCA.** Yes, there is something to be said against it, but I think that you should not make a fuss about it.

**ARG.** I don’t agree; and I will make as much fuss as I please. What? do you not think that I have every reason to be angry?

**SCA.** Certainly. I was angry myself when I first heard of it; on your behalf, I gave your son a good scolding. Just ask him how I reprimanded him, and how I lectured him about the little respect he showed his father, whose very feet he ought to kiss. You yourself could not have talked better to him. But what of that? I gave in to reason, and considered that, after all, he was not so wrong as you might think.

**ARG.** What are you telling me? He has done nothing really wrong by thoughtlessly getting married to a perfect stranger.

**SCA.** What is to be done? he was pushed into it by his destiny.

**ARG.** Oh, oh! That’s the last reason in the world. One can commit the greatest crimes imaginable — cheating, stealing, and killing — and say as an excuse that one was pushed into it by one’s destiny.

**SCA.** Come now! You take my words too literally. I mean to say that he was unavoidably forced into this business.

**ARG.** And why did he let himself be forced into it?

**SCA.** Do you expect him always to be reasonable? Young men are young and don’t have all the prudence necessary to do what is reasonable. Just look at our Leandre, who,  
in spite of all my lessons, in spite of my warnings, has done even worse than your son. I’d like to know whether you yourself were not young once, and didn’t do foolish things just like others? In olden days, you were often in the company of women, that you  
had affairs with the best of them, and that you never gave in until you had reached  
your goal.

**ARG.** It is true, I admit it; but I always confined myself to courting women, and never went so far as to do what he has done.

**SCA.** But what was he to do? He sees a young woman who cares for him; for he takes after you in that all women like him. He thinks her charming, goes to see her, whispers sweet nothings, sighs as lovers sigh, and plays the passionate lover. She accepts his advances; he pushes his luck. He’s caught with her by her parents, who, weapon in hand, force him to marry her.

**SIL.** What a clever liar!

**SCA.** Was he supposed to let them kill him? It is still better to be married than to be dead.

**ARG.** I wasn’t told that it had happened that way.

**SCA.** Even worse.

**ARG.** Even worse.

**SCA.** Ask him, he’ll tell you the same thing.

**ARG.** He was married against his wishes?

**SIL.** Yes, Sir.

**SCA.** Would I lie to you?

**ARG.** Then he should have gone at once to a lawyer to sue because he was married by force.

**SCA.** This is precisely what he did not wish to do.

**ARG.** It would have made it easier for me to break off the marriage.

**SCA.** Break off the marriage?

**ARG.** Yes.

**SCA.** You will not break it off.

**ARG.** I won’t break it off?

**SCA.** No.

**ARG.** What! Do I not have the rights of a father, and fact that force was used against my son?

**SCA.** He will not consent to it.

**ARG.** He will not consent to it?

**SCA**. No.

**ARG.** My son?

**SCA.** Your son. Would you have him confess that he was frightened, and that it was by force that he was made to marry? He will not wish to confess that; it would do him no good, and he would then show himself unworthy of a father like you.

**ARG.** I don’t care.

**SCA.** He must, for his own honour and yours, say that he married of his own free will.

**ARG.** And, for my own honour, and for his, I want him to say the opposite.

**SCA.** I am sure he won’t do it.

**ARG.** I’ll make him do it.

**SCA.** He will not do it, I tell you.

**ARG.** He will do it, or I shall disinherit him.

**SCA.** You?

**ARG.** I.

**SCA.** Very well!

**ARG.** How nonsense?

**SCA.** You will not disinherit him.

**ARG.** I won’t disinherit him?

**SCA.** No.

**ARG.** No?

**SCA.** No.

**ARG.** Yes! This is really too much! I won’t disinherit my son!

**SCA.** No, I tell you.

**ARG.** Who will stop me?

**SCA.** You yourself.

**ARG**. I?

**SCA.** Yes, you’ll never have the heart to do it.

**ARG.** I will.

**SCA.** You are joking.

**ARG.** I am not joking.

**SCA.** Paternal love will carry the day.

**ARG.** No, it will not.

**SCA.** Yes, yes.

**ARG.** I tell you that I shall disinherit him.

**SCA.** Rubbish!

**ARG.** Don’t say rubbish.

**SCA.** Really! I know you are naturally kind.

**ARG.** No, I am not kind; I can be nasty when I choose. Let us stop arguing which enrages me. Go, you rascal, run and fetch my scoundrel, while I go to Mr. Geronte and tell him of my troubles.

**SCA.** Sir, if I can be useful to you in any way, you have but to command me.

**ARG.** I thank you. Oh! Why is he my only son? How I wish I had with me the daughter that Heaven has taken from me, so that I could make her my heir.

Act I SCENE VII — SCAPIN, SYLVESTRE.

**SIL.** I confess you are a great man; and things are on the right track. But, on the other hand, we are in need of money, and we have people chasing us.

**SCA.** Leave it to me; the plan is ready. I am only searching my brain to find a fellow we can trust, in order to play a character I need. But wait! Stand up straight! Push your hat down so you look fierce. Stand on one foot! Put your hand in your robe. Look angry! Walk about like a king in a play. That’s fine Follow me. I have secrets to change your face and voice.

**SIL.** I beg you, Scapin, don’t let me fall have problems with the law.

**SCA.** Never mind, we’ll share our perils like brothers, and three years more or less in the galleys aren’t enough to stop a noble heart.

**ACT II.**

Act II SCENE I — GERONTE, ARGANTE.

**GER.** Yes, no doubt with this weather we’ll have our people with us today; and a sailor who has arrived from Taranto told me just now that he had seen our man about to embark. But when my daughter arrives, we won’t be able to do what we were planning, and what you’ve just told me about your son has put an end to all the plans we had made together.

**ARG.** Don’t worry about that; I give you my word that I’ll remove that obstacle, and I am going to see about it this moment.

**GER.** Good heavens, Mr. Argante, shall I tell you? The raising of children is a thing that one could never be too careful about.

**ARG.** You’re right; but why do you say that?

**GER.** Because most of the follies of young men come from the way they’ve been raised by their fathers.

**ARG.** It happens sometimes; but what do you mean by that?

**GER.** What do I mean?

**ARG.** Yes.

**GER.** If, like a good father, you had disciplined your son when he was young, he would not have played such a trick on you.

**ARG.** I see. So you have disciplined your own much better?

**GER.** Certainly; and I would be very sorry if he had done anything like what yours has done.

**ARG.** And if that son, so well disciplined, had done worse even than mine?

**GER.** What?

**ARG.** What?

**GER.** What do you mean?

**ARG.** I mean, Mr. Geronte, that we shouldn’t be so quick to condemn the conduct of others, and that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

**GER.** I don’t understand what you mean.

**ARG.** Let me explain.

**GER.** Have you heard something about my son?

**ARG.** Perhaps I have.

**GER.** And, what?

**ARG.** Your Scapin, because I was so angry, only gave me a rough idea, and you can learn all the details from him or from someone else. For my part, I am going to consult a lawyer, and see what steps I can take. Good-bye.

Act II SCENE II — GERONTE

**GER.** What can it be? Worse than what his son did! I don’t know what anyone can do worse than that; and to marry without the consent of one’s father is the worst thing that I can possibly imagine.

Act II SCENE III—GERONTE, LEANDRE.

**GER.** Ah, here you are!

**LEA.** Ah! father, how glad I am to see you!

**GER.** Wait a minute, I have to speak to you first.

**LEA.** Let me hug you, and…

**GER.** Not so fast, I tell you.

**LEA.** What! father, you won’t let me express my joy with a hug?

**GER.** We have something to settle first.

**LEA.** But what?

**GER.** Just stand there, and let me look at you.

**LEA.** What for?

**GER.** Look me right in the eyes.

**LEA.** Well?

**GER.** What has taken place here in my absence?

**LEA.** What has taken place?

**GER.** Yes, what did you do while I was away?

**LEA.** What would you have had me do, father?

**GER.** I didn’t want you to do anything. I’m asking you what you did?

**LEA.** I have done nothing to give you reason to complain.

**GER.** Nothing at all?

**LEA.** No.

**GER.** You’re positive of that?

**LEA.** It is because I’m sure of my innocence.

**GER.** And yet Scapin has given me news of you.

**LEA.** Scapin!

**GER.** Oh! oh! that name makes you blush.

**LEA.** He has told you something about me?

**GER.** He has. But this is not the place to talk about it, and we must go elsewhere. Go home at once; I will be there shortly. Ah! traitor, if you mean to dishonour me, I will renounce you as my son, and you will have to flee my presence forever!

Act II SCENE IV — LEANDRE

**LEA.** To betray me this way! A rascal who for so many reasons should be the first to keep silent what I confided in him! To go and tell everything to my father! Ah! I swear by heaven that I will not let such treachery go unpunished.

Act II SCENE V — OCTAVE, LEANDRE, SCAPIN.

**OCT.** My dear Scapin, what I owe you! You are an admirable man, and how kind of Heaven to send you to help me!

**LEA.** Ah, ah! I am delighted to find you, rascal!

**SCA.** Sir, I am your servant; you do me too much honour.

**LEA.** You are acting the clever joker… Oh! I’ll teach you…

**SCA.** Sir!

**OCT.** Oh! Leandre.

**LEA.** No, Octave, don’t hold me back.

**SCA.** Eh! Sir.

**OCT.** For heaven’s sake!

**LEA.** Let me satisfy my anger.

**OCT.** In the name of friendship, Leandre, don’t hit him.

**SCA.** What have I done to you, Sir?

**LEA.** What you have done, traitor!

**OCT.** Take it easy!

**LEA.** No, Octave, I will have him confess here on the spot the treachery he played on me. Yes, traitor, I know the trick you have played; I’ve just learned of it. You didn’t think the secret would be revealed to me, did you? But I’ll have you confess it with your own lips, or I’ll run you through with my sword.

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, could you really have such a heart?

**LEA.** Speak then.

**SCA.** Have I done something to you, Sir?

**LEA.** Yes, scoundrel! and your conscience surely tells you what it is.

**SCA.** I assure you that I don’t know what you mean.

**LEA.** You don’t know?

**OCT.** Leandre!

**SCA.** Well, Sir, since you insist, I confess that I drank with some of my friends that small cask of Spanish wine you received as a present a few days ago; and I made that opening in the cask, and spilled some water on the ground around it, to make you think all the wine had leaked out.

**LEA.** What! Scoundrel, it was you who drank my Spanish wine, and you caused me to scold the servant, because I thought she had played the trick on me?

**SCA.** Yes, Sir; I beg your pardon.

**LEA.** I am glad to know this. But this isn’t what I’m talking about.

**SCA.** It isn’t, Sir?

**LEA.** No, it’s something else, much more important, and I’ll have you tell me.

**SCA.** I don’t remember, Sir, having done anything else.

**LEA.** You won’t talk?

**SCA.** Ah!

**OCT.** Gently!

**SCA.** Yes, Sir; it’s true that three weeks ago, when you sent me one evening to take a small watch to the Egyptian girl you love. I came back, my clothes spattered with mud and my face covered with blood and I told you that I had been attacked by robbers who had beaten me and had stolen the watch from me. I had kept the watch, Sir.

**LEA.** You who stole the watch?

**SCA.** Yes, Sir, to know the time.

**LEA.** Ah! You’re telling me some fine things; I have a very faithful servant! But this isn’t what I want to know.

**SCA.** It isn’t that?

**LEA.** No, you wretch! It’s something else I want you to confess.

**SCA.** Mercy on me!

**LEA.** Speak now; I’m in a hurry.

**SCA.** Sir, this is everything I’ve done.

**LEA.** Everything?

**OCT.** Ah!

**SCA.** Well, Sir, you remember that werewolf that six months ago beat you soundly, and almost made you break your neck down a cellar when you fell when running away?

**LEA.** Well?

**SCA.** Sir, I was playing the werewolf.

**LEA.** It was you, wretch! playing the ghost?

**SCA.** Only to frighten you a little, and break you of the habit of making us go out every night as you did.

**LEA.** I’ll remember, at the right time and place, all I’ve just heard. But come to the point now, and tell me what you said to my father.

**SCA.** To your father?

**LEA.** Yes, scoundrel! to my father.

**SCA.** I haven’t seen him since his return!

**LEA.** You haven’t seen him?

**SCA.** No, Sir.

**LEA.** Is that the truth?

**SCA.** Absolutely; and, he’ll tell you so himself.

**LEA.** And yet it was he who told me.

**SCA.** With your leave, Sir, he did not tell you the truth.

Act II SCENE VI — LEANDRE, OCTAVE, CARLE, SCAPIN

**CAR.** Sir, I bring you bad news concerning your love affair.

**LEA.** What?

**CAR.** Your Egyptians are about to carry off Zerbinette. She came, in tears, to ask me to tell you that, unless, within two hours, you take them the money they have asked you for her, you will lose her forever.

**LEA.** Two hours?

**CAR.** Two hours.

Act II SCENE VII — LEANDRE, OCTAVE, SCAPIN.

**LEA.** Ah! my dear Scapin, I beg you to help me!

**SCA.** Ah! “my dear Scapin!” I am “my dear Scapin”, now that I’m needed.

**LEA.** I’ll forgive you all that you confessed, and more if you’ve done more.

**SCA.** No, no; forgive me nothing; run your sword through my body. I should be delighted if you were to kill me.

**LEA.** Instead of that, I beg you to give me life, by helping my love.

**SCA.** No, no, you’re better off killing me.

**LEA.** You are too dear to me. I beg of you to use that wonderful genius of yours that can conquer everything.

**SCA.** No, kill me, I tell you.

**LEA.** Ah! for heaven’s sake, don’t think of that now. Try to give me the help I ask.

**OCT.** Scapin, you must do something to help him.

**SCA.** How can I after such humiliating abuse?

**LEA.** I beg you to forget my outburst, and use your skill for me.

**OCT.** I add my prayers to his.

**SCA.** I can’t forget such an insult.

**OCT.** Let go your resentment, Scapin.

**LEA.** Could you abandon me, Scapin, with my love in this cruel predicament?

**SCA.** To just come and insult me like that.

**LEA.** I’m wrong, I admit it.

**SCA.** To call me a scoundrel, a traitor, an infamous wretch!

**LEA.** I’m really sorry.

**SCA.** To want to put your sword through my body!

**LEA.** I ask you to forgive me, with all my heart; and if you want to see me at your feet, here I am begging you not to abandon me.

**OCT.** Scapin, how can you resist that?

**SCA.** Well, get up, and next time don’t be so hasty.

**LEA.** Will you try to work for me?

**SCA.** I’ll see.

**LEA.** But you know that time is short.

**SCA.** Don’t worry. How much do you need?

**LEA.** Five hundred crowns.

**SCA.** And you?

**OCT.** Two hundred pistoles.

**SCA.** I’m going to get this money from your fathers. As far as yours is concerned, my plan is all ready. And as for yours, although he is the biggest miser imaginable, we’ll find him easier still: you know that - Heaven be praised! - he’s not very smart. He’s the type who will believe anything you want him to. This shouldn’t offend you: there is not an iota of resemblance between you two; and you know already what the world thinks, that he is your father only in name.

**LEA.** Gently, Scapin.

**SCA.** All right, all right, what does it matter? But, I see Octave’s father coming. Let’s begin with him, since he is the first to cross our path. Go both of you; and you,, tell Silvestre to come quickly, and play his part.

**SCA.** Here he is, pondering.

**ARG.** Such behaviour and such a lack of consideration! To throw himself into an engagement like that! Ah! Impertinent youth.

**SCA.** Your servant, Sir.

**ARG.** Good morning, Scapin.

**SCA.** You are thinking of this business of your son’s.

**ARG.** Yes, I admit that it grieves me.

**SCA.** Sir, life is full of troubles; and we should always be prepared for them. I heard, a long time ago, the saying of an ancient philosopher, which I have never forgotten.

**ARG.** What?

**SCA.** That if the father of a family has been away from home, he ought to think about all the sad news that may greet him on his return. He ought to imagine his house burnt down, his money stolen, his wife dead, his son married, his daughter ruined; and be very thankful for whatever falls short of all this. In my little philosophy, I’ve taken this lesson to heart; and I never come home without expecting to have to deal with the anger of my masters, their scoldings, insults, kicks to the behind, blows, and horse-whipping. I always thank the heavens for whatever I don’t get.

**ARG.** That’s all very well; but this rash marriage that interferes with what we want to do is more than I can bear. I have consulted with some lawyer to see if we can annul it.

**SCA.** Well, Sir, if you’ll believe me, you will look for some other way of settling this. You know what a lawsuit means in this country, and you’ll find yourself stuck in a terrible thornbush.

**ARG.** You’re right, of course; but what else can I do?

**SCA.** I think I have found something better. The sorrow that I felt for you made me search to find some means of getting you out of trouble; for I can’t bear to see kind fathers saddened by their children, and, besides, I have always had a special regard for you.

**ARG.** I am much obliged.

**SCA.** I went to the brother of the young girl whom your son married. He is one of those hired killers, one of those men who are all sword thrusts, who speak of nothing but fighting, and who think no more of killing a man than of swallowing a glass of wine. I spoke to him of this marriage; I showed him how easy it would be to have it broken off, because of the injustice towards your son. I spoke to him of your rights as father, and of the weight that your rights, your money, and your friends would have on the courts.  
I turned him every which way so that at last he was ready to hear the propositions  
I made to him to fix the matter for a sum of money. In short, he’ll consent to ending  
the marriage, provided you pay him.

**ARG.** And how much did he ask?

**SCA.** Oh! at first things utterly out of the question.

**ARG.** What?

**SCA.** Utterly extravagant things.

**ARG.** But what?

**SCA.** He spoke of no less than five or six hundred pistoles.

**ARG.** Let him choke to death on his pistoles! Is he joking?

**SCA.** That’s what I told him. I rejected all such proposals, and made him understand that you were not a man to be duped in that fashion, or of whom anyone can ask five or six hundred pistoles! However, after much talking, this is what we decided upon. “The time has now come,” he said, “when I must leave for the army. I am buying my equipment, and my need of money forces me to agree, in spite of myself, to what you propose. I must have a proper horse, and I can’t get a good one under sixty pistoles.”

**ARG.** Ah, well, I’ll give sixty pistoles.

**SCA.** He must have the harness and pistols, and that will cost very nearly  
twenty pistoles more.

**ARG.** Twenty and sixty make eighty.

**SCA.** Exactly.

**ARG.** It’s a lot; still, I consent to that.

**SCA.** I must also have a horse for my servant, which will cost about thirty pistoles.

**ARG.** The deuce! Let him go. He’ll have nothing at all.

**SCA.** Sir!

**ARG.** No; he’s an impertinent fellow.

**SCA.** Would you want his servant to walk?

**ARG.** Let him go as he pleases, and his master too.

**SCA.** My Heavens, Sir, really don’t stop for so little. Don’t litigate, I beg of you, but rather give all to save yourself from the clutches of the courts.

**ARG.** Ah, well alright! I’ll bring myself to give these thirty pistoles.

**SCA.** “I also need,” he said, “a mule to carry…”

**ARG.** Let him go to hell with his mule! This is asking too much. Let’s go before the judges.

**SCA.** I beg of you, Sir!

**ARG.** No, I will give nothing.

**SCA.** Sir, one small mule.

**ARG.** No, not even an ass.

**SCA.** Consider…

**ARG.** No, I tell you; I prefer going to court.

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, what are you talking about, and what are you getting yourself in for? Just cast a glance on the ins and outs of justice, look at the number of appeals, the levels of jurisdiction; how many procedures; how many ravenous wolves through whose claws you’ll have to pass; sergeants, lawyers, counsel, registrars, substitutes, reporters, judges and their clerks. There is not one of these who, for the merest trifle, wouldn’t knock out the best case in the world. Ah! Sir, if you can, save yourself from such a hell. You’ll be damned in this world to have to go to court; and the mere thought of a trial is enough to make me want to flee to the Indies.

**ARG.** How much does he want for the mule?

**SCA.** Sir, for the mule, for his horse and that of his servant, for the harness and pistols, and to pay a little something he owes at the hotel, he asks altogether two hundred pistoles.

**ARG.** Two hundred pistoles?

**SCA.** Yes.

**ARG.** No, no, we will go to court.

**SCA.** Reflect on what you’re doing.

**ARG.** I’ll go to court.

**SCA.** Don’t go and jump in…

**ARG.** I’m going to court.

**SCA.** But to go to court, you need money. You must have money for the summons; you must have money for the claims, for the prosecution, the attorney’s opening, solicitor’s advice, relative evidence, and his time in court. You must have money for the consultations and pleadings of the counsel, for the right of withdrawing the briefs, and for copies of the documents. You must have money for the reports of the substitutes, for the court fees at the conclusion, for the registrar’s enrolment, the drawing up of deeds, sentences, decrees, rolls, signatures, and clerks’ dispatches; let alone all the presents you will have to give. Give this money to that man, and there you are out of the whole thing.

**ARG.** Two hundred pistoles!

**SCA.** Yes, and you’ll gain by it. I have made a small calculation in my head of all that justice costs, and I find that by giving two hundred pistoles to your man you will have a large margin left—say, at least a hundred and fifty pistoles—without taking into consideration the cares, troubles, and anxieties, which you will have spared yourself. If only to avoid being the butt of some nasty counsel, I would rather give three hundred pistoles than go to court.

**ARG.** I don’t care about that, and I challenge all the lawyers to say anything against me.

**SCA.** You’ll do as you please, but in your place I would avoid a lawsuit.

**ARG.** I will not give two hundred pistoles.

**SCA.** Ah! here is our man.

Act II SCENE IX — ARGANTE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE

**SIL.** Scapin, show me that Argante who is the father of Octave.

**SCA.** Why, Sir?

**SIL.** I have just been told that he wants to go to court and have the court annul my sister’s marriage.

**SCA.** I don’t know if that’s his intention, but he won’t consent to the two hundred pistoles you had asked for; he says it’s too much.

**SIL.** Death! Blood! If I find him, I’ll make mince-meat of him, even if I have to be broken alive on the wheel afterwards.

**SCA.** Sir, the father of Octave has courage and perhaps he won’t be afraid of you at all.

**SIL.** Him? Him? Blood! Death! If he were here, I would run my sword through his guts. Who is that man?

**SCA.** That’s not him, Sir; that’s not him.

**SIL.** Is he one of his friends?

**SCA.** No, Sir; on the contrary, he’s his greatest enemy.

**SIL.** His greatest enemy?

**SCA.** Yes.

**SIL.** Ah! zounds! I am delighted. You’re an enemy of that scoundrel Argante, are you?

**SCA.** Yes, yes, I assure you.

**SIL.** Shake hands, shake hands. I give you my word, I swear upon my honour, by the sword I wear, by all the oaths I could take, that, before the day is over, I’ll have delivered you of that rascally knave, of that scoundrel Argante. Believe me.

**SCA.** Sir, violence is not allowed in this country.

**SIL.** I don’t care, and I have nothing to lose.

**SCA.** He will certainly be on his guard; he has relatives, friends, servants, who will take his part against you.

**SIL.** Blood and thunder! It’s what I ask. Ah! Death! ah! Blood! I wish I could meet him at this very moment, with all his help. If he would appear before me, surrounded by thirty of them! Why don’t they fall on me, arms in hand? What! you villains! you dare to attack me? Now, Death! Kill and no mercy! Attack. Thrust. Push. Again. Ah knaves! ah! rascals! ah! You’ll have a taste of it. I’ll give you your fill. Come on, you rabble! come on. That’s what you want, you there. You’ll have your fill of it, I say. Stick to it, you brutes; stick to it. Now, then, parry; now, then, you. Parry this; parry. You draw back? Stand firm, man! Death! What! Never flinch, I say.

**SCA.** Sir, we have nothing to do with it.

**SIL.** That will teach you to dare to trifle with me.

Act II SCENE X — ARGANTE, SCAPIN.

**SCA.** Well, Sir, you see how many people are killed for two hundred pistoles. Now I wish you well.

**ARG.** Scapin.

**SCA.** What do you say?

**ARG.** I’m willing to give the two hundred pistoles.

**SCA.** I am very glad of it, for your sake.

**ARG.** Let’s go find him; I have them on me.

**SCA.** Better give them to me. You must not, for your honour, appear in this, now that you have passed for another; and, besides, I would be afraid that he would ask you for more, if you made yourself known to him.

**ARG.** Yes, but I should be glad to see what happens when I give my money.

**SCA.** Do you mistrust me then?

**ARG.** Oh no, but…

**SCA.** Grief! Sir; either I’m a thief or an honest man; it’s one or the other. Would I deceive you, and in all this, have I any interest other than yours and that of my master, whom you want to take into your family? If I am suspect, I’ll have no more to do with all this, and you can look for somebody else to get you out of the mess.

**ARG.** Here then.

**SCA.** No, Sir; do not trust your money to me. I would rather you used someone else.

**ARG.** My heavens! Here.

**SCA.** No, I tell you; don’t trust me. How do you know I don’t want to steal your money from you?

**ARG.** Take it, I tell you, and don’t force me to ask you again. However, mind you take precautions with him.

**SCA.** Trust me; he isn’t dealing with an idiot.

**ARG.** I’ll wait for you at home.

**SCA.** I’ll be sure to go. One down, one to go! Ah! My word, here he is. The heavens send them one after the other to fall into my net.

Act II SCENE XI — GERONTE, SCAPIN.

**SCA.** Oh Heaven! Oh unforeseen misfortune! O miserable father! Poor Geronte, what will you do?

**GER.** What is he saying about me with that pained face?

**SCA.** Can no one tell me where to find Mr. Geronte?

**GER.** What is it, Scapin?

**SCA.** Where can I find him, to tell him of this misfortune?

**GER.** What is it, Scapin?

**SCA.** In vain I run everywhere to find him.

**GER.** Here I am.

**SCA.** He must have hidden himself in some place that no one can guess.

**GER.** Hey! are you blind that you don’t see me?

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, there is no way to find you.

**GER.** I have been in front of you for the last hour. What is it about?

**SCA.** Sir…

**GER.** What!

**SCA.** Sir, your son…

**GER.** Well! My son…

**SCA.** Has fallen into the strangest misfortune in the world.

**GER.** And what?

**SCA.** I found him a little while ago looking very sad about something that you had said to him, and which you had very wrongly mixed me into. Trying to lighten his sorrow, we went and walked about in the harbour. There, among other things, we saw a luxurious Turkish galley. A young Turk, with a nice look about him, invited us to go in, and held out his hand to us. We went in. He was most civil to us; gave us some lunch. We ate the most wonderful fruit you could imagine and drank wine we found to be the best in the world.

**GER.** What is so sad about all this?

**SCA.** Wait Sir, you’ll see. While we were eating, he made the galley leave the harbour, and when he saw we were in the open sea and far from the harbour, the Turk made me get into a small boat, and sent me to tell you that unless you sent through me five hundred crowns, he would take your son to Algiers.

**GER.** What the devil! five hundred crowns!

**SCA.** Yes, Sir; and, moreover, he only gave me two hours for this.

**GER.** Ah! the scoundrel of a Turk to murder me in this way!

**SCA.** It is up to you, Sir, to find quickly the means of saving from slavery a son whom you love so tenderly.

**GER.** What the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** He had no idea what would happen.

**GER.** Go, Scapin, go quickly, and tell that Turk that I’ll send the police after him.

**SCA.** The police in the open sea! Are you joking?

**GER.** What the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** A cruel destiny sometimes leads people.

**GER.** You must, Scapin, you must act the part of a faithful servant.

**SCA.** What, Sir?

**GER.** You must go and tell that Turk that he must send me back my son, and that you will take his place until I’ve collected the sum he asks.

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, are you thinking about what you are saying? and do you imagine that that Turk will be foolish enough to receive a poor wretch like me in place of your son?

**GER.** What the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** He could not have foreseen his misfortune. Remember, Sir, that he has given me only two hours.

**GER.** You say that he asks…

**SCA.** Five hundred crowns.

**GER.** Five hundred crowns! Has he no conscience?

**SCA.** Really! Conscience in a Turk!

**GER.** Does he understand what five hundred crowns are?

**SCA.** Yes, Sir, he knows that five hundred crowns are one thousand five hundred francs.

**GER.** Does the scoundrel think that one thousand five hundred francs are to be found in the street?

**SCA.** There are people who never listen to reason.

**GER.** But what the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** It’s, true but hey? One couldn’t predict these things. I beg you, Sir, hurry.

**GER.** Here is the key to my armoire.

**SCA.** Good.

**GER.** You’ll open it.

**SCA.** Very good.

**GER.** You’ll find a big key in the left side that is the one for my attic.

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** You’ll take all the clothes in the large basket and you’ll sell them to the second-hand clothes dealers and go ransom my son.

**SCA.** Eh, Sir, are you dreaming? I wouldn’t get a hundred francs from that; and also,  
you know how little time I’ve been given.

**GER.** But what the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** Ah! what wasted words! Let it be; remember that time presses, and that you run the risk of losing your son. Alas! my poor master, perhaps I’ll never see you again, and that at this very moment, they are taking you away to be a slave in Algiers! But Heaven will be my witness that I did all I could, and that, if you are not brought back, one can blame the lack of a father’s love.

**GER.** Wait a minute, Scapin; I’m going to fetch that sum of money.

**SCA.** Hurry Sir, then, for I’m afraid of not being in time.

**GER.** You said four hundred crowns; did you not?

**SCA.** No, five hundred crowns.

**GER.** Five hundred crowns!

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** What the devil was he doing in that galley?

**SCA.** You’re right, but hurry.

**GER.** Could he not have chosen another place to stroll?

**SCA.** It is true; but act promptly.

**GER.** Cursed galley!

**SCA.** That galley sticks in his throat.

**GER.** Here, Scapin, I had forgotten that I’ve just received this sum in gold, and I had no idea it would so soon be wrenched from me.

**SCA.** Yes, Sir.

**GER.** But mind you tell that Turk that he is a scoundrel.

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** An infamous wretch.

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** A man without conscience, a thief.

**SCA.** Leave that to me.

**GER.** That he takes from me 500 against all laws.

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** That I don’t give them to him in life or death.

**SCA.** All right.

**GER.** And that, if I ever catch him, I’ll know how to get revenge on him.

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** Go, go quickly, and get my son.

**SCA.** Hallo! Sir.

**GER.** What?

**SCA.** Where is the money?

**GER.** Didn’t I give it to you?

**SCA.** No, indeed, you put it back in pour pocket.

**GER.** Ah! it is grief that troubles my mind.

**SCA.** I can see that.

**GER.** What the devil was he doing in that galley? Ah! Cursed galley! Traitor of a Turk! May the devil take you!

**SCA.** He can’t get over the five hundred crowns I wrench from him; but he isn’t done yet with me, and I’ll make him pay in a different kind of money his imposture about me to his son.

Act II SCENE XII.-OCTAVE, LEANDRE, SCAPIN.

**OCT.** Well, Scapin, have your plans for me been successful?

**LEA.** Have you done anything to rescue my love affair from the trouble it’s in?

**SCA.** Here are two hundred pistoles I got out of your father.

**OCT.** Ah! how happy you make me.

**SCA.** For you, I could do nothing.

**LEA.** Then I must die, for I have nothing to live for without Zerbinette.

**SCA.** Take it easy, my goodness you move quickly!

**LEA.** What do you expect?

**SCA.** There, there, I have things for you right here.

**LEA.** Ah! you bring me back to life.

**SCA.** But on one condition, that you allow me to get a little revenge on your father for the trick he played on me.

**LEA.** Whatever you want.

**SCA.** You promise it to me in the presence of witnesses?

**LEA.** Yes.

**SCA.** There, take these five hundred crowns.

**LEA.** Ah! I will go at once and rescue the one I adore.

**ACT III.**

Act III SCENE I — ZERBINETTE, HYACINTHE, SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**SIL.** Yes, your lovers have decided that you should be together, and we are following their orders.

**HYA.** I find such an order very pleasant. I’m happy to be friends with her and would like to see the same friendship between us as there is between those we love.

**ZER.** I accept the offer, and I am not one to pull back when friendship is asked of me.

**SCA.** And when it is love that is asked of you?

**ZER.** Ah! love is a different thing. One runs more risk, and I feel less daring.

**SCA.** I think you’re against my master now but what he has done for you should give you the confidence to love him as he loves you.

**ZER.** I only trust him in his honesty, and it is not enough to reassure me entirely. I am of a happy disposition, and laugh all the time. But though I laugh, I am serious about many things; and your master deceives himself if he thinks that it is enough for him to have bought me, for me to be altogether his. It will cost him something else besides money, and for me to respond to his love as he wants me to, he must give me his word, with certain little ceremonies which are thought necessary.

**SCA.** This is how he understands it. He only wants you in goodness and honesty as his wife, and I am not a man to have become mixed in this business if he had had other thoughts.

**ZER.** It’s what I’d like to hear you say; but I see the father causing certain problems.

**SCA.** We’ll find a way to take care of that.

**HYA.** We’re in the same situation. That should make us better friends. We do have the same problems, the same fears.

**ZER.** At least you know who your parents are and they can agree to the marriage you have contracted. But I have no such help to fall back on, and the position I am won’t be softened by the wishes of a father whose only care is money.

**HYA.** You have an advantage in that the one you love is not being tempted by another marriage.

**ZER.** A change in a lover’s heart is not what we should fear the most. We may rely on our own power to keep the conquest we’ve made; but what I particularly dread is the power of the fathers, for our merit means nothing.

**HYA.** Alas! Why must the course of true love never run smooth? How sweet it would be to love with no obstacle in those chains that tie two hearts.

**SCA.** You’re joking! Security in love is a very unpleasant calm. Constant happiness becomes boring to us. We need ups and downs in life; and the difficulties that mix into things awaken our passions and increase our pleasure.

**ZER.** Good heavens, Scapin, tell us a little about your plan, which, I was told, is so amusing; and how you managed to get money out of your old miser. You know that the trouble of telling me something amusing is not wasted on me, and that I well repay those who take that trouble by the joy you’ll see it gives me.

**SCA.** Silvestre here will do that as well as I can. I have in my mind a certain little scheme of revenge that I mean to enjoy thoroughly.

**SIL.** Why do you enjoy getting into situations that could cause you trouble?

**SCA.** Trouble can be fun.

**SIL.** I told you already, you would give up the idea you have if you would listen to me.

**SCA.** Yes, I prefer listening to myself.

**SIL.** Why the devil do you engage in such a business?

**SCA.** Why the devil do you trouble yourself about it?

**SIL.** It is because I can see that you will get yourself beaten up for no reason.

**SCA.** Oh, well, it will be on my back, and not on yours.

**SIL.** It is true that you are master of your own back, and you’ll dispose of it as you please.

**SCA.** Such dangers have never stopped me, and I hate those cowards who are so afraid of what might happen that they never do anything.

**ZER.** We need your help.

**SCA.** Go, I’ll rejoin you soon. It will never be said that with impunity I’ve been put into the position of betraying myself, and of revealing secrets better left unknown.

Act III SCENE II — GERONTE, SCAPIN.

**GER.** Well! Scapin, how goes this business of my son’s?

**SCA.** Your son, Sir, is safe; but you now run the greatest danger in the world, and I very much wish you were safe in your house.

**GER.** How is that?

**SCA.** Even as we speak, there are people looking for you everywhere planning to kill you.

**GER.** Me?

**SCA.** Yes.

**GER.** And who?

**SCA.** The brother of that person Octave has married. He thinks that you intend to give to your daughter the place she occupies in the heart of Octave and break up the marriage; and he has resolved to wreak his vengeance on you and kill you to avenge his honour. All his friends, swordsmen just like him, are looking for you and asking about you everywhere. I have seen scores here and there, soldiers of his company, who question everyone they meet, and they are even running all the roads that lead to your house. You cannot go home either to the right or the left without falling into their hands.

**GER.** What should I do, my dear Scapin?

**SCA.** I don’t know, Sir; it is an unpleasant business. I tremble for you from head to toe and… Wait a moment.

**GER.** Well?

**SCA.** No, no, it’s nothing.

**GER.** Could you not find some way of saving me?

**SCA.** I can indeed think of one, but I should run the risk of a beating.

**GER.** Ah! Scapin, show yourself a devoted servant. Don’t abandon me, I beg of you.

**SCA.** I will do what I can. I like you so much that I can’t leave you helpless.

**GER.** Be sure that I will reward you for it, Scapin, and I promise you this coat of mine when it is a little more worn out.

**SCA.** Wait a minute. I have just thought of the very thing to save you. You must get into this sack, and …

**GER.** Ah!

**SCA.** No, no, no, no, it’s nobody. I say, you must get in here, and must be very careful not to move. I will put you over my shoulders, and carry you like a bundle of something or other. I’ll be able to take you past your enemies, and see you safely into your house. Once there, we’ll barricade the door and send for help against this injustice.

**GER.** That’s a good plan.

**SCA.** The best in the world. You’ll see. Ah! You’ll pay me for that lie.

**GER.** What?

**SCA.** I say that your enemies will be well caught. Get in right to the bottom, and, above all things, be careful not to show yourself and not to move, whatever may happen.

**GER.** You can trust me to keep still.

**SCA.** Hide yourself; here comes one of the killers that is looking for you. “Vat! I shall not hab de pleasure to kill dis Geronte, and one vill not in sharity show me vere is he?” Do not stir. “Pardi! I vill find him if he lied in de mittle ob de eart” Do not show yourself. “Ho! you man vid a sack!” Sir! “I will give thee a pound if thou vilt tell me where dis Geronte is.” You are looking for Mr. Geronte? “Yes, dat I am.” And on what business, Sir? “For vat pusiness?” Yes. “I vill, pardi! trash him vid one stick to dead.” Oh! Sir, people like him are not thrashed with sticks, and he is not a man to be treated so. “Vat! dis fob of a Geronte, dis prute, dis cat.” Mr. Geronte, Sir, is neither a fop, a brute, nor a cad; and you ought, if you please, to speak differently. “Vat! you speak so mighty vit me?” I am defending, as I ought, an honourable man who is maligned. “Are you one friend of dis Geronte?” Yes, Sir, I am. “Ah, ah! You are one friend of him, dat is goot luck!” “Here is vat I give you for him.” Ah! ah! ah! ah! Sir. Ah! ah! Sir, gently! Ah! pray. Ah! ah! ah! “Dere, bear him dat from me. Goot-pye.” Ah! the wretch. Ah!…ah!

**GER.** Ah! Scapin, I can’t bear it any longer.

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, I am bruised all over, and my shoulders hurt terribly.

**GER.** How! It was on mine he hit his stick.

**SCA.** I beg your pardon, Sir, it was on mine.

**GER.** What do you mean? I am sure I felt the blows, and feel them still.

**SCA.** No, I tell you; it was only the end of his stick that reached your shoulders.

**GER.** You should have gone a little farther back, then, to spare me, and…

**SCA.** Take care, here is another man who looks like a foreigner. “Frient, me run like one Dutchman, and me not fint all de tay dis treatful Geronte.” Hide yourself well. “Tell me, you, Sir gentleman, if you please, know you not vere is dis Geronte, vat me look for?” No, Sir, I do not know where Geronte is. “Tell me, trutful, me not vant much vit him. Only to gife him one tosen plows vid a stick, and two or tree runs vid a swort tro’ his shest.” I assure you, Sir, I do not know where he is. “It seems me I see sometink shake in dat sack.” Excuse me, Sir. “I pe shure dere is sometink or oder in dat sack.” Not at all, Sir. “Me should like to gife one plow of de swort in dat sack.” Ah! Sir, beware, pray you, of doing so. “Put, show me ten vat to be dere?” Gently, Sir. “Why chently?” You have nothing to do with what I am carrying. “And I, put I vill see.” You shall not see. “Ah! vat trifling.” It is some clothes of mine. “Show me tem, I tell you.” I will not. “You vill not?” No. “I make you feel this shtick upon de sholders.” I don’t care. “Ah! you vill poast!” Oh! oh! oh! Oh! Sir. Oh! oh! “Goot-bye, dat is one littel lesson teach you to speak so insolent.” Ah! Damn the blabbermouth! Oh!

**GER.** Ah! my bones are broken.

**SCA.** Ah! I’m dying.

**GER.** Why the devil do they strike on my back?

**SCA.** Take care; I see half a dozen soldiers coming together. “Now, we must discover this Geronte; let us look everywhere carefully. We must spare no trouble, scour the town, and not forget one single spot. Let us search everywhere. Which way shall we go? Let us go that way. No, this. On the left. On the right. No. Yes.” Hide yourself well. “Ah! here is his servant. I say, you rascal, you must tell us where your master is. Speak. Be quick. At once. Make haste. Now.” Ah! gentlemen, one moment. “If you do not tell us at once where your master is, we will shower a wave of blows on your back.” I had rather suffer anything than tell you where my master is. “Very well, we will beat you soundly.” Do as you please. “You want to be beaten, then?” I will never betray my master. “Ah! you will have it—there.” Oh!

**GER.** Ah! Miserable rotten villain! You are killing me?

Act III SCENE III — ZERBINETTE, GERONTE.

**ZER.** Ha, ha! I really need some air.

**GER.** You’ll pay for this, I swear.

**ZER.** Ha, ha, ha! What a funny story! What a good dupe that old guy is!

**GER.** This is no laughing matter; and you have no reason to laugh.

**ZER.** What? What do you mean, Sir?

**GER.** I mean to say that you must not laugh at me.

**ZER.** At you?

**GER.** Yes.

**ZER.** What? Who is laughing at you?

**GER.** Why do you laugh in my face?

**ZER.** This has nothing to do with you. I am only laughing because of a story they have just told me, the funniest tale you can ever imagine. I don’t know if it is because the matter concerns me, but I have never heard anything funnier than the trick that has just been played by a son on his father to get some money from him.

**GER.** By a son on his father to get some money out from him?

**ZER.** Yes; and if you just ask me, you’ll find me ready to tell you the whole story as I’m always asking to repeat all the tales I hear.

**GER.** Please, tell me that story.

**ZER.** Gladly. I am not risking much by telling it you, as it is not likely to remain secret for long. Fate has made me part of a group of those people they call Egyptians, and who, going from province to province, tell people’s futures, and sometimes do other things as well. When we arrived in this town, a young man saw me and fell in love with me. Immediately, he begins to follow me and like all young men, he thinks he needs only open his mouth to get his wish; but he was received in such a dignified manner that he had to change his tune. He confessed his love to the people who owned me and found them ready to let him have me for some money. But the sad story was that my lover, like most young men of good background, was without cash. And he has a father who, though very rich, is a first-class miser, the worst man in the world. Wait! I can’t remember his name. Ah! Help me a bit! Can’t you remember someone in this town who is known as the worst kind of miser?

**GER.** No.

**ZER.** There is some Ron…Ronte in his name. Or…Oronte… No. Ge…Geronte. Yes! Geronte, that’s my nasty guy. I found it. That’s the miser I mean. Well, to come back to our story, our people wanted to leave this town today, and my lover was going to lose me for lack of funds if, in order to wrench some out of his father, if he had not secured the help of a clever servant he has. As for that servant’s name, I remember it perfectly. He is called Scapin. He is an incomparable man who deserves all the praise that can be heaped on him.

**GER.** Devil that you are!

**ZER.** But just listen to the trick he used to catch dupe—ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! I can’t think of it without laughing out loud – ha, ha, ha! He went to find that miserly dog—ha! ha! ha!—and told him that while walking in the harbour with his son—ha! ha!—they had seen a Turkish galley; that a young Turkish fellow had invited them to come in and eat—ah! ah!—and that, while they were eating, the galley had sailed; that the Turkish fellow had sent him back to land in a boat ordering him to tell his master’s father that he was taking the young man to Algiers unless he received at once 500 crowns. Ha! Ha! Ha! My miser is in agony. His love for his son fights in his heart his love of money. Asking him for five hundred crowns is like stabbing him five hundred times. Ha, ha, ha! He cannot resolve to give up that money and his pain makes him invent all kinds of ridiculous ways of getting his son back. He wants to send the police on the high seas! He asks his valet to go and take his son’s place while he is getting hold of the money he does not want to part with. Ha, ha, ha! He wants to exchange for 500 crowns some old clothes that are not worth 30. Ha, ha, ha! The valet points out every time how absurd his ideas are and each sentence is painfully punctuated by “Why the devil did he go into that galley? Cursed galley! Treacherous Turk!”. But it seems to me you are not laughing at my tale. What do you think of it?

**GER.** I say that the young man is a rascal—a good-for-nothing fellow—who will be punished by his father for the trick he has played on him; that the Egyptian woman is stupid and rude to insult an honourable man who will teach her what it costs to corrupt young men from good families, and that the valet is a rogue whom Geronte will send to the gallows.

Act III SCENE IV — ZERBINETTE, SILVESTRE.

**SIL.** Where are you running? Do you know you were speaking to the father of your lover?

**ZER.** I have just realized that; and I told him his own story without knowing who he was.

**SIL.** What do you mean by his story?

**ZER.** Yes, I was so full of that story that I longed to tell it to somebody. But what does it matter? So much the worse for him. I do not see that things can be made either better or worse.

**SIL.** You were in a great hurry to chatter; and it is indiscreet, indeed, not to keep quiet on your own affairs.

**ZER.** He would have heard it from somebody else.

Act III SCENE V — ARGANTE, ZERBINETTE, SILVESTRE.

**ARG.** Hello! Silvestre.

**SIL.** Go back in the house; my master is calling me.

SCENE VI — ARGANTE, SILVESTRE.

**ARG.** So you agreed, rascals, you agreed —Scapin, you, and my son — to cheat me out of my money; and you think that I am going to put up with it?

**SIL.** Upon my word, Sir, if Scapin is trying to cheat you, I wash my hands of the whole affair. I assure you that it has nothing to do with me.

**ARG.** We shall see, jailbird.! We’ll see; and I ‘ll be damned is anyone gets to lead me around by the nose.

Act III SCENE VII.-GERONTE, ARGANTE, SILVESTRE.

**GER.** Ah! Mr. Argante, you see me overwhelmed by trouble.

**ARG.** And you see me in the greatest sorrow.

**GER.** This rascal, Scapin, by a trick, took five hundred crowns from me.

**ARG.** This same rascal, Scapin, by a trick, took two hundred pistoles from me.

**GER.** He was not satisfied with getting those five hundred crowns, but treated me in a manner I am ashamed to speak of. But he— will pay for it.

**ARG.** I’ll have him punished for the trick he has played on me.

**GER.** And I mean to make an example of him.

**SIL.** Please God, don’t let me get dragged into this!

**GER.** But, this isn’t all; and one misfortune leads to another. I was looking forward to the happiness of today having my daughter. I had pinned all my hopes on her; and I have just learned that she left Tarente a long time ago; and there is every reason to believe that she died at sea.

**ARG.** But why did you keep her in Tarente, instead of giving yourself the joy of having her with you?

**GER.** I had my reasons for it; some family interests forced me till now to keep my second marriage very secret. But what do I see?

Act III SCENE VIII — ARGANTE, GERONTE, NERINE, SILVESTRE.

**GER.** What! Here you are, Nerine?

**NER.** Ah! Mr. Pandolphe, how…

**GER.** Call me Geronte, and do not use the other name any more. The reasons that forced me to take it at Tarente no longer exist.

**NER.** Alas! that change of name caused us pain; what troubles and difficulties in trying to find you here!

**GER.** Where are my daughter and her mother?

**NER.** Your daughter, Sir, is not far from here; but before I let you see her, I must ask you to forgive me for having given her away in marriage, because of the bad situation we were in, when we had no longer any hope of finding you.

**GER.** My daughter is married?

**NER.** Yes, Sir.

**GER.** And to whom?

**NER.** To a young man, called Octave, the son of a certain Mr. Argante.

**GER.** Oh Heavens!

**ARG.** What a coincidence.

**GER.** Take us, take us quickly where she is.

**NER.** You have but to enter this house.

**GER.** Go in first; follow me, follow me, Mr. Argante.

**SIL.** Well, this is very surprising.

Act III SCENE IX — SCAPIN, SILVESTRE.

**SCA.** Well, Silvestre, what are our people doing?

**SIL.** I have two things to tell you. One, the Octave matter is all right; our Hyacinthe is,  
it seems, the daughter of Geronte, and chance made happen what the wisdom of the fathers had decided. The other, that the old men threaten you with the greatest punishments— particularly Mr. Geronte.

**SCA.** Oh, that’s nothing. Threats have never done me any harm; they are but clouds that pass far above our heads.

**SIL.** You had better take care. The sons may reconcile with their fathers, and leave you in the lurch.

**SCA.** Leave that to me. I shall find the means of soothing their anger, and…

**SIL.** Go away; I see them coming.

Act III SCENE X — GERONTE, ARGANTE, HYACINTHE, ZERBINETTE, NERINE, SILVESTRE.

**GER.** Come, my daughter; come to my house. My happiness would be perfect if I could see your mother with you.

**ARG.** Here is Octave coming just at the right time.

Act III SCENE XI — ARGANTE, GERONTE, OCTAVE, HYACINTHE, ZERBINETTE, NERINE, SILVESTRE.

**ARG.** Come, my son, come and rejoice with us the happy adventure of your marriage. Heaven…

**OCT.** No, father, all your proposals for marriage are useless. I must be open with you, and you have been told that I am engaged.

**ARG.** Yes; but what you do not know…

**OCT.** I know all I care to know.

**ARG.** I want to tell you that the daughter of Mr. Geronte…

**OCT.** The daughter of Mr. Geronte will never be anything to me.

**GER.** It is she who…

**OCT.** No, Sir; I ask you to forgive me, but my decision is made.

**SIL.** Listen…

**OCT.** No, be silent; I will listen to nothing.

**ARG.** Your wife…

**OCT.** No, I tell you, father, I would rather die than leave my dear Hyacinthe Yes, all you would do is useless; this is the one to whom my heart is engaged. I will have no other wife.

**ARG.** Well! she is the one we give you. What a devil of a deaf man you are never to listen to anything but your own ideas.

**HYA.** Yes, Octave, this is my father whom I have found, and all our troubles are over.

**GER.** Let us go home; we shall talk more comfortably at home.

**HYA.** Ah! father, I beg of you the favour not to part me from this charming young lady. She has qualities, which will be sure to make you like her when you know her.

**GER.** What! do you wish me to take to my house a girl with whom your brother is in love, and who just told me to my face a thousand insulting things?

**ZER.** Pray forgive me, Sir; I would not have spoken in that way had I known who you were, and I only knew you by reputation.

**GER.** What do you mean by reputation?

**HYA.** Father, the love my brother has for her is pure and I can answer for her virtues.

**GER.** This is all very well. You would try now to persuade me to marry my son to an unknown girl, a street-girl!

Act III SCENE XII.-ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDRE, OCTAVE, HYACINTHE, ZERBINETTE, NERINE, SILVESTRE.

**LEA.** My father, you must no longer say that I love a stranger without birth or wealth. Those from whom I bought her have just told me that she belongs to an honest family in this town. They stole her away when she was four years old, and here is a bracelet that they gave me to help me to find her parents.

**ARG.** Ah! Seeing this bracelet, this is my daughter whom I lost when she was four years old.

**GER.** Your daughter?

**ARG.** Yes, I see she is my daughter. I can see it in her face.

**GER.** Oh Heavens! what amazing things are happening!

Act III SCENE XIII — ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDRE, OCTAVE, HYACINTHE, ZERBINETTE, NERINE, SILVESTRE, CARLE.

**CAR.** Ah! Gentlemen, a strange accident has just taken place.

**GER.** What is it?

**CAR.** Poor Scapin…

**GER.** Is a rascal I want to hang.

**CAR.** Alas! Sir, you will not have that trouble. As he was passing near a building, a stonemason’s hammer fell on his head and broke his skull, leaving his brain exposed.  
He is dying, and he has asked to be brought in here to speak to you before he dies.

Act III SCENE XIV — ARGANTE, GERONTE, LEANDRE, OCTAVE, HYACINTHE, ZERBINETTE, NERINE. SILVESTRE, CARLE, SCAPIN.

**SCA.** Oh, oh! gentlemen, you see me… Oh! You see me in a sad state. Oh! I could not die without coming to ask forgiveness of all those I may have offended. Oh! Yes, gentlemen, before I draw my last breath, I beg you to forgive me all that I may have done, and particularly Mr. Argante and Mr. Geronte. Oh…

**ARG.** I forgive you; go in peace, Scapin.

**SCA.** It is you, Sir, I have offended the most, because of the beating with the stick…

**GER.** Let’s not speak of it. I forgive you, too.

**SCA.** I feel in dying a tremendous grief for the beating which I…

**GER.** Good God! be quiet.

**SCA.** That unfortunate beating that I gave…

**GER.** Be quiet, I tell you; I forgive you everything.

**SCA.** Alas! What goodness. But is it really with all your heart that you forgive me the beating which I…?

**GER.** Yes, don’t mention it. I forgive you everything. It’s done.

**SCA.** Ah! Sir, I feel relieved for your kind words.

**GER.** Yes, I forgive you, but on one condition - that you die.

**SCA.** How! Sir?

**GER.** I retract my words if you recover.

**SCA.** Oh! oh! all my pains are coming back.

**ARG.** Mr. Geronte, for we are all so happy, let us forgive him without any condition.

**GER.** Let it be so.

**ARG.** Let us go to supper, and enjoy our happiness.

**SCA.** And me, take me to the end of the table where I’ll await death.

**THE END**