

ANSELME

I hurried back to tell you that, by chance,
That purse could cause you trouble. Though at a glance
The coins look good, I fear that I mixed in,
By error, a few which are not genuine,
And I've brought honest gold to exchange for those.
Alas, these counterfeiters! Their number grows
Each year, and thanks to them it's come about
That all transactions now are tinged with doubt.
Hang all such rascals! They deserve to die.

LÉLIE

You're kind to replace the bogus coins, though I
Did not see any. They must be hard to spot.

ANSELME

I'll recognize them; here, let me have the lot.
It's all here?

LÉLIE

Yes.

ANSELME

Good. Now, you're mine once more,
Dear purse. Slip into my pocket, as before.
Young thief, you'll get no more ill-gotten wealth.
So, you bury a man when he's in perfect health!
To a poor old father-in-law, what might you have done?
To think I'd chosen you to be my son,
And wanted Hippolyte to take your name!
Be off. Go die, sir, of remorse and shame.

LÉLIE

(Alone:)

Well, he saw through me. But how could he be so quick
To grow suspicious of our clever trick?

Scene 6

Begin

Lélie, Mascarille.

MASCARILLE

So, you'd gone out! I've looked for you everywhere.
Well, now! Success at last! I do declare
That I've no equal as a scheming knave.
Give me the money, and I'll go buy our slave.
Your rival's going to be thunderstruck.

LÉLIE

Ah, my dear fellow, I fear we're out of luck.
You won't believe the bitterness of my lot.

MASCARILLE

What are you saying?

LÉLIE

Anselme divined our plot,
And, offering to replace some counterfeit
Coins in that purse, he just made off with it.

MASCARILLE

You're joking, surely?

LÉLIE

I fear it's all too true.

MASCARILLE

You really mean it?

LÉLIE

Unfortunately, I do.
And now, I know, you're going to be furious.

MASCARILLE

I, sir? Of course not. Anger is injurious
To health, and I let nothing trouble me.
Whether Célie's in bondage or goes free,
Whether Léandre buys her, or does not,
Are matters I don't care about one jot.

LÉLIE

Oh, don't deny me your concern and aid,
And please forgive the little slip I made!
Up to that time, you'll grant, I'd played the part
Of a grief-stricken son with wondrous art;
The sharpest eye could never have perceived
That I was not most horribly bereaved.

MASCARILLE

Go on and praise yourself I couldn't care less.

LÉLIE

Oh, well. I made a mess of it, I confess.
But if you wish me happy, I hope you will
Forget my stupid error, and help me still.

MASCARILLE

Your servant, sir. I've other things to do.

LÉLIE

Dear Mascarille!

MASCARILLE

No.

LÉLIE

Help me, I beg of you.

MASCARILLE

No, I'll do nothing.

LÉLIE

If you won't change your mind,
I'll kill myself.

MASCARILLE

Do, if you're so inclined.

LÉLIE

You won't relent?

MASCARILLE

No.

LÉLIE

You see that my sword is drawn?

MASCARILLE

Yes.

LÉLIE

I shall thrust it through my heart.

MASCARILLE

Go on.

LÉLIE

Won't you be sad to have taken my life from me?

MASCARILLE

No.

LÉLIE

Then, farewell.

MASCARILLE

Farewell, Monsieur Lélie.

LÉLIE

So! ...

MASCARILLE

Hurry up, please; less talk, more suicide.

LÉLIE

Because you'd get my wardrobe if I died,
You'd have me play the fool and pierce my heart.

MASCARILLE

I knew that you were faking, from the start.
Men often swear to kill themselves, and yet
Few of them, nowadays, make good their threat.

Scene 7

Trufaldin, Léandre, Lélie, Mascarille. Trufaldin and Léandre confer in low voices at stage rear.

LÉLIE

Look! Léandre and Trufaldin in conversation!
He'll buy Célie! Oh, dread and trepidation!

MASCARILLE

No doubt he wants to buy her, and if he's got
Money enough, he'll get her, like as not.
Well, I'm delighted: It's the price that must be paid
For all the blundering rashness you've displayed.

LÉLIE

What can I do now, in this fearful plight?

MASCARILLE

Who knows?

LÉLIE

I know; I'll challenge him to a fight.

MASCARILLE

What good would come of that?

LÉLIE

Advise me, then:
How can I stop him?

MASCARILLE

There, there; I'll once again
Show pity and forgive you. Leave me now;

I'll keep an eye upon him, and learn somehow,
By peaceful means, how his affairs proceed.

end

(Exit Lélie.)

TRUFALDIN

(To Leandre:)

When the man comes, I'll deliver, as agreed.

(Exit Trufaldin.)

MASCARILLE

(Aside, as he exits:)

I must deceive him, so that he'll unveil
His plans to me, and I can make them fail.

LÉANDRE

(Alone:)

Thank Heaven, my happiness is guaranteed;
What I've arranged is certain to succeed.
There's nothing now to fear, and I'm exempt
From anything my rival might attempt.

MASCARILLE

(Utters these two lines offstage, then enters:)

Ouch! Ouch! Help, murder! Oh, what a cruel blow!
Stop it, you brute, you monster! Oh! Oh! Oh!

LÉANDRE

What's this? What ails you? Why these cries of pain?

MASCARILLE

Two hundred blows he gave me, with his cane.

LÉANDRE

Who did?

MASCARILLE

Lélie.

LÉANDRE

But why?

MASCARILLE

For a mere bagatelle
He's thrown me out, and beaten me as well.

LÉANDRE

That's very wrong of him.

MASCARILLE

As soon as I can,
I vow to avenge myself on that vile man.
Yes, you shall learn, you brute who've battered me,
That you can't strike me with impunity,
That, servant though I am, I have my pride,
And that my four years' service at your side
Did not deserve this harsh emolument,
Which both my honor and my back resent.
Yes, I shall be avenged! You've wished me to
Secure a certain charming slave for you,
But I'll make sure now that some other lover,
With my assistance, will deprive you of her.

LÉANDRE

Do calm your anger, Mascarille, and hear me.
I've always liked you, and have wished sincerely
That a keen, loyal fellow of your kind