

TRUFALDIN

What I know, I know.

Some sneaky business is afoot, that's clear.

(To Célie:)

Go in. Don't leave the house again, d'you hear?

And you, you knaves, when next I'm to be tricked,

Make certain that your stories don't conflict.

(Exit.)

MASCARILLE

Well done! I only wish he'd given us

A well-earned thrashing for having blundered thus.

Why did you have to show yourself, and why

Did you make a speech that gave my words the lie?

LÉLIE

I thought it the thing to say.

MASCARILLE

You thought unwisely.

But why should any act of yours surprise me?

You know so many ways to botch and blunder

That no mistake of yours is grounds for wonder.

LÉLIE

Should a small slip be so fiercely reprehended?

Have I done such harm that matters can't be mended?

If you've no new scheme to make the lady mine,

Do at least thwart Léandre's sly design:

Don't let him buy Célie before I do.

Well, lest by some mistake I anger you,

I'll take my leave.

MASCARILLE

Good.

(Exit Lélie.)

Money, it is plain,

Would be a wondrous help in our campaign,

But having none, we'll find some other way.

Scene 5

Anselme, Mascarille.

ANSELME

It's a shameful time we live in, I must say!

Never was wealth so wastefully displayed,

Yet the loans I make are grudgingly repaid.

How blithely people borrow, yet all debts

These days are like the children one begets

In pleasure, but which cost such pain to bear.

When gold flows into our purse, we're debonair,

But when we must deliver, and get it out—

Well, that's a thing to weep and groan about.

Still, this two thousand which, for two years past,

Was owed to me, has now been paid at last.

That's something.

MASCARILLE

(Aside:)

Look! Here comes some splendid game

To shoot at on the wing, and I shall aim

To bag him with some flattery and lies.

I well know on what theme to improvise . . .

(To Anselme:)

Anselme, I just saw . . .

ANSELME

Whom?

MASCARILLE

Your dear Nérine.

ANSELME

What did she say of me, that bewitching queen?

MASCARILLE

She's mad for you.

ANSELME

She is?

MASCARILLE

It pains my spirit
To see such yearning.

ANSELME

I'm gratified to hear it.

MASCARILLE

She's almost dead of love, poor little thing.
"Anselme, my dear," one hears her whimpering,
"When shall you quench these flames that you've ignited,
And our two hearts in marriage be united?"

ANSELME

But why has she hid these feelings until now?
Women are very deep, I must allow.
Tell me now, Mascarille: although I'm old,
Are my looks still fairly pleasant to behold?

MASCARILLE

Though not quite handsome, your face is very striking,
And a certain fair one finds it to her liking.

ANSELME

I see.

MASCARILLE

(Trying to seize Anselme's purse.)

And so she's in a lovesick state,
And thinks of you as—

ANSELME

What?

MASCARILLE

Her future mate;
And vows to . . .

ANSELME

What?

MASCARILLE

To capture, come what may,
Your purse.

ANSELME

My what?

MASCARILLE

(Taking the purse and letting it fall to the ground.)

Your heart, I meant to say.

ANSELME

Ah yes, of course. See here, when next you see
The girl, I hope that you'll speak well of me.

MASCARILLE

Gladly.

ANSELME

Good-bye, then.

MASCARILLE

(Aside:)

Bless you! Go with God!

ANSELME

(Coming back.)

Heavens! I've just done something very odd,
And you must think me stingy, I'm afraid.
In my love affair, you've promised me your aid,
You've brought me welcome news for which I feel
Most grateful, and yet I didn't reward your zeal!
Here, so you won't forget me . . .

MASCARILLE

No, no, please!

ANSELME

Let me . . .

MASCARILLE

I don't expect gratuities.

ANSELME

I know, but still—

MASCARILLE

No, I'd be mortified;
I'm a man of honor, and it would hurt my pride.

ANSELME

Farewell, then.

MASCARILLE

(Aside:)

What a talker!

ANSELME

(Coming back.)

I've a notion to
Send the dear girl some gift by way of you;
I'll give you enough to buy her some small trinket—
A ring, perhaps, or a bracelet if you think it
Would please her taste.

MASCARILLE

No, keep your money, sir:
Leave it to me; I'll take some gift to her.
I've a charming ring that someone gave me lately,
And if it fits her, you can compensate me.

ANSELME

Good. Give it in my name, then, and endeavor
To keep her love for me as strong as ever.