

**Product Code A0515-FC**

# **Tartuffe—and All that *Jazz!***

**A New Adaptation of Moliere's Classic Set in the Roaring Twenties**

**by  
Gordon C. Bennett and Dana A. Priest**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through  
Heartland Plays, Inc. at [heartlandplays.com](http://heartlandplays.com)  
[playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com)  
customer service: 406-431-7680**

**Copyright © 2013 by Gordon C. Bennett and Dana A. Priest  
This work is registered with the Writers Guild of America, East**

# Tartuffe—and All that Jazz!

by Gordon C. Bennett and Dana A. Priest

## Cast of Characters

\*PHILIPPE, *a chauffeur*

ORGON, *master of the house*

MADAME PERNELLE, *Orgon's mother*

ELMIRE (Pron. “Elmeer”), *Orgon's wife*

DAMIS, *son of Orgon, Elmire's step-son*

MARIANE, *daughter of Orgon, Elmire's step-daughter*

VALERE, *in love with Mariane*

CLEANTE, *brother-in-law to Orgon*

TARTUFFE, *a self-styled “holy man”*

DORINE, *lady's maid to Mariane*

\*MR. LOYAL, *Sheriff's Deputy*

SHERIFF, *Loyal's superior*

REPORTER for a local newspaper (*m/f*)

MISTY and LENA, *women pursuing Tartuffe*

\*These characters may be doubled.

TOTAL actors, with doubling: 14.

## Setting

*Single Set: The home of Orgon, in St. Louis, Mid-1920's*

## Etc.

In this new version of Moliere's classic, set in rhymed verse like the original, the essential theme and characters are retained: Tartuffe the hypocrite; Elmire the object of Tartuffe's affections; Orgon the dupe; Cleante, Moliere's *raisonneur*, Dorine the feisty maid; Mariane and Valere, the quarreling lovers aided by Dorine, who get married, finally, despite Orgon's objections. In line with the times and context, however, there are other values added: Young Damis is a percussionist seeking a career with a jazz band; his sister Mariane, rather shy and demure in the original, now becomes a flapper in the Age of Jazz, and Orgon is a vintner troubled by Prohibition, Tartuffe has added motive for betraying his host: he not only wants Orgon's home and wife, but his vineyards; it's touch and go again, but the demise of Tartuffe unfolds in a most surprising fashion. All ends well, as in Moliere's original, but the climax and denouement seem far more plausible—and hilarious—in this version.

## **Tartuffe—and All that Jazz!**

by Gordon C. Bennett and Dana A. Priest

### **ACT I; Scene One**

**READER'S NOTE:** Following Moliere, we have put the format into “French Scenes,” where a scene break occurs whenever a character enters or leaves the stage. Also, we've maintained the Five-Act tradition of 17<sup>th</sup> Century French comedies. The INTERMISSION occurs between ACTs III and IV.

*(AT RISE: The rear of Orgon's home near St. Louis, June 1927, early afternoon; a spacious, square-ish porch or patio extending from the back of the house into the yard; an ivy-covered trellis, or climbing roses, near the {screen door} entrance to the interior, with steps downstage on either side of the porch, to egress Orgon's yard. There is some furniture, notably a table covered by a tablecloth suitable for Organ's “hidden” scene later; a large fruit bowl on that table, from which characters may take bananas, apples etc. to eat; also, a radio on a side table, with a small vase of flowers. Two to four gaslights are set on poles, at the corners, which become more prominent as the afternoon wanes and dusk turns into evening after Intermission. A simple drum set {with a tarp cover} stands just off the porch/patio. Carrying drumsticks, DAMIS enters and turns on the radio. **JAZZ MUSIC PLAYS.** He then removes the cover from the Drum Set, sits and plays, loosely following the beat of the radio music. PHILIPPE, in his chauffeur's uniform enters from around the side of the house opposite to DAMIS. He looks about, then lights a cigarette. MARIANE enters from Interior and the screen door slams, “startling” PHILIPPE, who drops his cigarette on the floor and stamps it out. MARIANE carries a covered painting with a small easel. She sets them on the table center and lifts the cover to reveal the painting, a cubist work amateurishly inspired by Duchamp. DAMIS and PHILIPPE notice this and both climb the steps to the porch level. While they admire the painting MARIANE takes two glasses from inside the side table; then DAMIS produces a small flask and pours a little liquor into them. PHILIPPE frantically searches for anything that will hold liquid, then finds the vase, dumps the flowers, and holds it out to DAMIS. DAMIS pours him a few drops and PHILIPPE smiles and nods his thanks. **The MUSIC ENDS and the RADIO COMMENTATOR breaks in.***

**RADIO COMMENTATOR** (*Recorded voice, with a bit of static*)

That's the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, performing at the Washington University Fieldhouse, brought to you on KMOX, the voice of St. Louis, Missouri. While the band takes a short break, let's bring you up to date. The temperature is a comfortable 83 degrees this fine spring day. No sign of precipitation today or tomorrow. In Pittsburgh, Honus Wagner's Pirates are leading our Cardinals by 2-0 in the top of the third. Remember the jazz concert tonight on the riverside beginning at 6:00 PM, and featuring some fine musicians from the Whiteman orchestra. Plenty of room on the riverbank, so bring a couple of blankets and plenty of good old Southern cookin' to share all around. Now let's return to the King of Jazz.

**MUSIC:** RADIO; “THE CHARLESTON”. *MARIANE and DAMIS dance and PHILIPPE laughs and snaps his fingers. NOISE INTERIOR: PHILIPPE quickly goes to the screen door and looks in. He turns back with a panicked look and motions to DAMIS and MARIANE, who stop dancing immediately. MARIANE takes her painting, wraps it, and slides it together with the easel behind the side table. DAMIS hides the glasses in a drawer or chest. PHILIPPE restores the flowers to the vase, then stands smartly awaiting his employer. MADAME PERNELLE enters, from inside, carrying a handbag and two hatboxes. CLEANTE follows, lugging two suitcases; then DORINE and ELMIRE follow, also with luggage. MADAME PERNELLE drops what she's carrying to turn off the radio. MUSIC OUT.)*

## ACT I; Scene Two

MADAME PERNELLE

The devil's music, children! I suppose you think it's fun!

MARIANE

It's all the rage, Grandma. We're learning the Charleston!

MADAME PERNELLE

Philippe!

PHILIPPE

Madame?

MADAME PERNELLE

Quick, load these in the car.

*(MADAME PERNELLE hands what she's carrying to PHILIPPE, who exits Down Right with her stuff, an action he will repeat later. ELMIRE ENTERS from inside, out of breath, carrying her mother-in-law's umbrella, followed by DORINE, carrying more luggage, which she drops at the edge of the porch-stage.)*

ELMIRE

I can't keep up!

*(MADAME PERNELLE takes the umbrella from ELMIRE. The former will brandish it freely throughout the scene.)*

MADAME PERNELLE

Then please stay where you are!

I can dispense with your polite attention.

I've seen enough, and more I dare not mention!

ELMIRE

But what have we done that you find so offensive?  
Your son will ask—

MADAME PERNELLE

Don't be so defensive!  
You know full well what drives me from this place.  
My daughter-in-law, your house is a disgrace!  
Each one does what's right in his own eyes,  
And no one heeds my words when I advise,  
But every one of you must have your say,  
And that is why I'm leaving you today.

DORINE

If...

MADAME PERNELLE

You talk too much, don't say another word!  
A servant should be seen and never heard.  
You people in particular should know their place,  
And not address your masters to their face.

DAMIS

But...

MADAME PERNELLE

You are a fool, my boy; "f-o-o-l"  
That spells your name, now go and learn it well.  
Don't think your grandma doesn't know your sin—  
Your "ciggies," "hooch," your flappers, jazz and gin!  
I knew you'd never come to any good  
And told your father you'd wind up as a "hood."  
You play your drums and think it's making music,  
But your awful noise is nothing like Dvorak.  
I must have warned at least a hundred times,  
Your silliness and sins will end in crimes.

*(PHILLIPE re-enters and exits Down Right, taking another load to the car.)*

MARIANE

I think—

MADAME PERNELLE

His little sister now! God help us all!  
My dear, it's clear, you're headed for a fall.  
You may appear all innocent and meek,  
But I've seen you with your boyfriend cheek to cheek!  
And God knows what you do in dark theaters,  
Though he's the man, your sin is greater!

ELMIRE

But Mother...

MADAME PERNELLE

Daughter-in-law, this is your fault  
For not being the kind of mother that you ought.  
Their dear departed mother did much better,  
She never tried to dress like a trend-setter.  
But wore clothing that was ample.  
You really need to set a good example--

CLEANTE

But, madam...

MADAME PERNELLE

Professor, as for you,  
Though you're polite, your hifalutin theories just aren't true!  
You've tossed off faith and elevated Science,  
And worship every modern home appliance!  
Your teaching of from where mankind descends,  
Results in making monkeys out of men!  
If chance and instinct tell us what to do,  
Then we should all just move into the zoo!  
Such a lowered view of God's Creation  
Is just the sort of thing that wrecks our nation!

*(PHILIPPE re-enters and exits Down Right, taking another load to the car.)*

DAMIS

I'm sure in this your friend Tartuffe agrees...

MADAME PERNELLE

And you should thank God for him, on your knees!  
I can't abide an imbecile like you  
Critiquing anything that saint might do!

DAMIS

So I'm the only critic? Why must I submit  
To the tyranny of that foul hypocrite?  
And what gives him the right, in our own home,  
To rule it like some emperor of Rome?

MADAME PERNELLE

I'm sure that all he censures is well-censured.  
Obey, and your salvation is assured.  
My son should teach you all to love him well  
And thus avoid the path that leads to hell.

DAMIS

No, Grandma, it can't be tolerated  
I cannot love a man who should be hated.  
Not my father, nor anyone else on earth  
Can make me laud that scoundrel's worth.  
I would be lying to say otherwise  
And I can see no way of compromise.  
We're headed for a duel, and one I fear,  
Is going to get the bum's rush out of here!

DORINE

Remember when he came to us in rags?  
His clothes worn out, his feet in paper bags?  
He was a beggar needing quite a boost,  
But now he acts as if he rules the roost!  
It's scandalous to see—this florid louse  
Has made himself the master of the house!  
He treats you all like you were his boarders—

MADAME PERNELLE

Dorine, just follow orders!

DORINE

You may treat his words as holy writ,  
But he is nothing but a hypocrite.  
I wouldn't trust him, or his friend Laurent,  
Not ever trust the two of them—no, I won't!

MADAME PERNELLE

Hold your tongue! How can you dare to libel  
Such holy men, so learned in the Bible?  
They're your superiors in every way  
And you should listen to the things they say.

MADAME PERNELLE, *Continued*

Their one desire is to save your soul  
And see your name up yonder on God's roll.  
Instead you all reject their words in hate  
And that is why you're in this sorry state!

*(PHILIPPE re-enters, picks up more luggage and exits, taking another load to the car.)*

DORINE

If he wants more disciples, then why is it  
That now he won't permit our friends to visit?  
He's brought an end to all our celebrations  
And cut us off from friends and our relations—  
Except, of course, for you, Madame Pernelle—  
Why could *that* be? I think that I can tell:  
I'd say he has a crush here on the Mrs.  
And longs to be the only one she kisses.

*(General laughter; MADAME PERNELLE is enraged.)*

MADAME PERNELLE

Is there no limit to your filthy mind  
In conjuring condemnations of this kind?  
I tell you he is truly heaven sent  
And urge you to—without delay—repent!  
The end is near, as dear Tartuffe has shown,  
And you must face God's judgment on your own.  
Christ will soon return—quite soon, I'd say—  
No hiding place for you—not on that day!

*(General groans and stifled laughter)*

Besides, you think Tartuffe's the only one  
Complaining of the things here going on?  
Your neighbors hate your parties on the lawn—  
The crowds, the jazz, the dancing until dawn—  
The company you keep is causing scandal!

DORINE

*(Sarcastically)* The neighbors *talk*? That's more than I can handle!  
Madam, please, the people *always* talk!  
Avoid it? We could never take a walk,  
Or venture out to work, or shop, or play,  
For fear of what town gossipers might say!

MADAME PERNELLE

(*To ELMIRE*) You'll let this servant prattle on this way?  
Nevertheless,, I mean to have *my* say!  
In taking in that pious man, my son  
Did much the wisest thing he's ever done.  
Perhaps he's left the business world behind,  
But a more enriching life he'll find  
By following the wisdom of Tartuffe—  
And you should not rebel at his reproof!  
These visits, garden parties, social calls  
Which delight you so—the devil uses all  
To draw you from the kingdom of God's son  
You'll dance the Charleston to oblivion!

(*PHILIPPE re-enters, exhausted, sees no more luggage for the car and sits with a sigh on the edge of the porch. Beat. Mme. PERNELLE throws him a sharp look; he stands to attention.*)

MADAME PERNELLE, *Continuing*

And no one speaks of any pious matter,  
There's only idle talk, and songs, and chatter;  
Besides, a sober person's head goes round  
At all your parties, just from all the sound!  
Everyone at once must have his say—  
(*All try to speak; she silences them with a gesture*)  
But as the preacher said the other day,  
“It really is the Tower of Babylon,”  
For all the people here just babble on!  
And so, to illustrate his point, he spoke...  
(*To CLEANTE, who is snickering*)  
Laughing already, sir? Well, what's the joke?  
Go find your liberal friends and laugh your fill!  
Farewell, Elmire, I've said all that I will.  
Tell Orgon I'll see him at the church;  
To seek me here would be a fruitless search.  
(*Smacking PHILIPPE with her umbrella*)  
Don't just stand there, posing like Lindbergh!  
*Someone* has to drive the Duesenberg!

(*PHILIPPE hurries off Down Right, followed by Mme. PERNELLE. MARIANE and DAMIS follow her off. ELMIRE exits to indoors, leaving CLEANTE AND DORINE*)

## ACT I; Scene Three

CLEANTE

I won't bother to see her to her car,  
My patience with her doesn't extend that far/

DORINE

She's so obsessed with her Tartuffe—  
A perfect target for one to spoof!

CLEANTE

It does appear her son has caught her curse.  
To see him, you would say he's ten times worse!  
This man who was a pillar of the church,  
A pioneer in business and research,  
Who led his troops so bravely at the Marne  
Is acting like a donkey in a barn!  
He bows and scrapes, and calls Tartuffe his brother,  
And shows him more affection than his mother!  
Orgon accepts his so-called wisdom and advice  
As if Tartuffe were not a man, but Christ!

*(DORINE is appalled, crosses herself. Beat, then:)*

DORINE

At table he must have the catbird seat  
And gobbles up the tenderest meat;  
He stuffs himself, with steak or mutton  
While Orgon delightedly applauds the glutton;  
If he belches, Master says, "God bless!"  
If he wants seconds, the Master cries "Yes,"  
Of course, the best for dear Tartuffe! He dotes  
Upon him, and every chance he gets he quotes  
His words to others. He takes his trifling acts for wonders  
While overlooking all his blunders—Orgon's a goner.  
The fellow fools him with a dozen masks of honor.  
Even his disciple, Laurent, an idiot to the core,  
Makes it his business to spread Tartuffe's manure.

CLEANTE

I say, Dorine—

DORINE

—and then he has the gall  
To come and preach repentance to us all!  
And Laurent bursts in with rolling eyes  
And the lackey starts to sermonize!  
He rages at us for our “worldly things”  
And tosses out our makeup, rouge and rings!  
The other day the young Miss bought some garters  
And let them lie on Fox's Book of Martyrs.  
This bluenose saw and almost cast a kitten—  
Had I not intervened, she'd have been smitten!

CLEANTE

You don't mean—

DORINE

Yes, if we object to either lout  
We're likely to be smacked upon the snout!  
And he exhorts Orgon to do the same  
And pummel us to save the family name!

## **ACT I; Scene Four**

*(ELMIRE ENTERS briskly with MARIANNE and DAMIS)*

ELMIRE

Be glad you didn't follow down the drive;  
That woman's words would drive bees from their hive!

DAMIS

She's such a nag! I'm glad to see her go!

ELMIRE

But even from afar she'll bring us woe!  
She said she's going to tell her son again  
That “making wine's as bad as making gin!”

MARIANE

But he's not making wine, although he should!  
There're lots of legal loopholes where he could—  
Medicinal, sacramental, and “home use,”  
It need not all be raisins, jam, and juice!

DORINE

Raisins, jams, and grape juice are all fine,  
But *these* grapes are bred for making wine!

CLEANTE

I heard one of the Californians' tricks  
Is to press their grapes into two-pound bricks,  
A Vino salesman here received a shipment  
With labels saying, "Caution. May Ferment;  
If left in water becomes alcoholic."  
You should have seen the spending spree and frolic!

DAMIS

Why didn't someone here come up with that?  
We should try it next time we've a vat.  
I've got connections, and can be quite sly—  
Outwit the revenuers? I'm your guy!

MARIANE

You, a bootlegger? Please, don't make me laugh. (*DAMIS makes a face at her.*)

CLEANTE

Young man, control yourself. And don't pout...  
I'm sure that Prohibition's on its way out.

ELMIRE

I hope you're right. If it's not repealed  
I fear this family's fate is sealed.  
(*Beat*) But my head is throbbing and I must lie down.  
When Orgon appears he'll know where I'll be found.

CLEANTE

I'll linger here until he comes along;  
Just to say good-bye and then be gone.

(*ELMIRE EXITS with MARIANE to Interior.*)

## ACT I; Scene Five

DAMIS

Please talk to him about my sister's match;  
I like Valere a lot—he's quite a catch!  
Father has all but given them his word,  
But Tartuffe has turned his head – or so I've heard –  
With malicious hints and outright slander.  
Though given her hand, Valere must now unhand her!  
I'm quite concerned with this affair myself.

DORINE

Why should it worry you, naughty elf?

DAMIS

If my sister marries her Valere  
That helps my chances with *his* sister Claire—  
A baby vamp whom all the guys adore;  
She's got the hootchi-koo and so much more!

DORINE

Well, I declare! What are you talking of?  
You're much too young to really fall in love!  
(*Looks about*) Be quiet now—let's stop this silly talk!  
I see your father coming up the walk.

(*DAMIS EXITS, quickly, to Interior. ORGON ENTERS, from offstage, carrying a newspaper.*)

## ACT I; Scene Six

ORGON

Ah, good morning, brother. How's your health?

CLEANTE

My health is fine, you see. As to my wealth... (*HE shrugs*)  
That's something else. But it was good to see you!  
(*Aside*) And better far to *see* you than to *be* you!  
But I was just departing...

(*But he doesn't. ORGON nods, then sits, glances at newspaper; then to DORINE:*)

ORGON

Dorine...

DORINE

Yes, Master?

ORGON

(*To CLEANTE*) Cleante, don't go.

(*CLEANTE takes a seat and observes the following with interest.*)

ORGON, *Continuing*

(*To DORINE*) Has everything gone well these last two days?  
What's new? Has there been some malaise?

DORINE

Madam had fever, and a splitting headache.  
For two nights straight she tossed and turned, awake.

ORGON

(*Nods, indifferently*) And...Tartuffe?

DORINE

Tartuffe? Why, he's a specimen of health—  
Well-fed, rested, quite his proper self  
!

ORGON

(*As if TARTUFFE was ill*) Poor man!

DORINE

At supper Madame wouldn't touch her food;  
Headaches and nausea had so destroyed her mood.

ORGON

And...Tartuffe?

DORINE

He felt so bad to see her sicken  
That, quick as a flash, he swallowed up two chickens,  
A soup, salad, baked Virginia ham  
Then—in tears—devoured a leg of lamb.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

The fever racked her so—she couldn't sleep,  
Although she spent the whole night counting sheep.

ORGON

And...Tartuffe?

DORINE

He belched, got up and told us “Toot-a-loo!”  
Then went to bed and slept the whole night through.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

As for your *wife*, we rang up Richard Dewey,  
The most esteemed physician in Saint Louie.  
He came right over with a laxative  
And when she cried “I don't think I'll live”  
He gave her sulfa drugs and some cocaine,  
And then she fell asleep with little pain.

ORGON

And...Tartuffe?

DORINE

He missed her at the breakfast table  
So ordered double portions from our Mabel—  
Sausage, biscuits, gravy, eggs and grits,  
Orange juice—he gave poor Mabel fits!  
To guarantee the meal not go to waste  
He ate and drank it all with greatest haste.

ORGON

Poor fellow!

DORINE

And so, since you inquired, both are fine,  
And I can see that ease your troubled mind.  
I'm off to see my mistress, and I'll tell  
Her just how thrilled you are she's doing well!

*(ORGON nods. DORINE exits and CLEANTE steps forward.)*

## ACT I; Scene Seven

CLEANTE

Dear brother, you are such a sap!  
Your wife Elmire has been severely ill,  
But you don't care to hear it. Instead you will  
Instead, demand to hear the latest of Tartuffe,  
That worthless bum you took under your roof!  
Where did you come by this infatuation?  
Can such a man provide such inspiration  
That you ignore your friends and family  
To hear and repeat his little homilies?

ORGON

Stop there, brother-in-law. You do not know him  
Or you would understand the debt I owe him.  
He's weaned me from this world and its affections  
And made me God's per his directions.  
By following Tartuffe as an earnest disciple  
I've grown detached from this world and its trifles.  
I'm almost to the point, I think, that I  
Could see my mother, wife, and children die  
And feel no pain, no sorrow, no remorse.

CLEANTE

Now there's a humane sentiment—of course!  
You think it's fine to see your family *die*?

ORGON

But I will see them in the sweet “bye and bye.”  
Unless, of course, they all end up in hell...  
Then I won't see them—and it's just as well!

CLEANTE

Well, I'll be damned!

ORGON

You needn't be, my brother.  
Follow Tartuffe, like me and my dear mother.

CLEANTE

I say...

ORGON

If you had seen him when I saw him first,  
You would have sung his praises unrehearsed.  
Two months ago while praying in God's house,  
I saw him creep in, meekly as a mouse,  
Dressed in rags and smelling quite horrific,  
And yet his countenance was beatific!  
He shuffled on both knees up to the altar  
And prayed for me, my wife, my son and daughter.  
Though he knew nothing of us, God revealed  
By special words of knowledge things concealed  
When he told me everything I'd ever done,  
Like the woman at the well, my heart was won!  
From his young friend Laurent I learned his plight,  
And asked them both to stay with us the night.  
I learned he once had been a man of wealth,  
But lost his home, his family, and his health  
All overnight—just like the Bible's Job!  
As soon as I heard, I gave him my best robe;  
I tried to give him cash—he wouldn't hear it—  
Except to give to others, poor in spirit.  
Just knowing him has so improved my life—  
And for my sake, he watches o'er my wife,  
Keenly observing everything she does—  
He seems more jealous than I ever was!  
He lets me know who ogles her or flirts  
And sees that such receive their just deserts!

CLEANTE

I don't doubt it! From everything I hear  
He's taken quite a shine to our Elmire.  
Damis avows he's seen him try to kiss her—  
And I would trust him nowhere near *my* sister.

ORGON

Elmire's a woman with a lot of charm,  
But Tartuffe could never mean me any harm!  
If you would listen, I have just explained--

CLEANTE

If he's a preacher where was he ordained?  
Have you seen any of his credentials?

ORGON

I find such things inconsequential.  
The marks of his apostleship are clear  
To anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear.  
He never needed any seminary;  
His Bible knowledge is extraordinary.  
Escatology's his special study  
And he straightens out my thoughts  
When they get muddy. I'm trying hard to learn  
Just when will be the date of Christ's return.  
The birth-pangs have begun, the time is near!  
Beware, Cleante, for soon he will appear!

CLEANTE

Each age has experts who have tried  
To puzzle out what God did choose to hide.  
If Christ himself knew not the day or hour,  
What makes you think that this man has the power  
To unravel revelation and prepare  
The world to meet its maker in the air?

ORGON

Not the world—the Maker is select!  
The rapture in the sky's for the elect;  
The rest must all endure great tribulation--  
Wars—the rise of nation against nation!  
Conquest! Famine! Pestilence and Death!  
The Horsemen of Apocalypse!

CLEANTE

Save your breath!

Brother, you cannot make me panic  
As if the world is doomed like the Titanic!  
“Seed time and harvest, summer and winter” too.  
God promised it to Noah, and to me and you.  
He will not destroy mankind again;  
He knows that we are human, and we sin,  
But we are getting better every day—  
Each generation learns a better way.  
We'll beat our plowshares into pruning hooks,  
Improve our minds and manners with great books.  
The backwardness of old ways holds no sway,  
And humankind's evolving...

ORGON

So they say!  
You're off again with your foolish talk  
Of fish that learn to crawl and snakes to walk!  
You're like that silly Scopes in Tennessee  
Who claims he won't believe what he can't see.  
But has he seen a fish become a man?  
If not, how does he know then that they can?

CLEANTE

You oversimplify to make a joke  
Of the faith in man of which I spoke—

ORGON

Put all your faith in *God*, and not in man,  
For man will do the damndest things he can!  
If you had been with me in France's trenches  
And seen the blood and gore, and smelled the stench,  
You'd know the horrors that I'm thinking of,  
And wouldn't babble on of mankind's love!

CLEANTE

I cannot claim that I am pious or devout.  
Indeed, I have no heavenly clout.  
I try to live according to the Golden Rule—  
And manage, for the most part, not to play the fool.  
No offense, dear brother, but you see,  
There are false heroes and faux devotees,  
Who beat their gums about their worthy deeds,  
But never sews good seeds among the weeds;

Yet those of true devotion, whom we should follow,  
Are so unlike those whose claims are hollow,  
That quietly they live their lives in grace  
And tend to others' needs without disgrace.

ORGON

*(Sarcastically)* You are the sole proponent of this creed!  
Wisdom shall die with you, since you have no seed.  
You are the only wise man on this world's stage,  
The William Jennings Bryan of the age!

CLEANTE

I never claimed to be a theologian  
But I can tell a true horse from a Trojan,  
And God's a God of love, not one of wrath--  
The worse you make him seem, the more I laugh!

ORGON

So you say! Hmmph! *(Beat)* Cleante, I'll hear no more!  
*(ORGON starts to go into the house.)*

CLEANTE

Just one more hing, before you reach that door!

ORGON

*(Stops)* Yes?

CLEANTE

About your daughter and her dear Valere--  
Just tell me—do the couple have a prayer?

ORGON

*(Pretending ignorance)* Eh, what?

CLEANTE

They are in love. They both have expectations.

ORGON

*(Shrugs)* Oh, well...

CLEANTE

Don't you approve? Why put off your declaration?

ORGON

*(Feigning uncertainty)* I'm not so sure...

CLEANTE

Of what? He is a fine, upstanding man.  
What's in your head? Can you have some other plan?

ORGON

*(Beat)* Perhaps.

CLEANTE

But why delay...?

ORGON

I didn't say...

CLEANTE

Brother-in-law, I will be heard—  
Do you mean to break your word?  
You'll break your daughter's heart as well.  
She loves Valere—she says he's really swell.

ORGON

Swell?

CLEANTE

That's how they talk these days.

ORGON

This slsng! It's not the way that she was raised!

CLEANTE

Valere's a fine young man. Surely no one's alleged  
Anything to make you break your pledge.

ORGON

Well, that depends...

CLEANTE

On what? Why all this hesitation?  
Your daughter and Valere—where's your elation?

ORGON

Well, perhaps...

CLEANTE

Valere has sent me here to settle matters.  
Are you going to leave this love affair in tatters?  
(*Beat*) What answer shall I convey?

ORGON

Whatever you like. Say—there's been a delay.

CLEANTE

The date is set, the church reserved. Orgon,  
Is the wedding off or is it on?

ORGON

That all depends. (*Starting to leave*) I'll see you anon.

CLEANTE

No, wait, Organ!

*(But ORGON EXITS, with a wave of dismissal)*

CLEANTE

*(Alone; to Audience)* I think Valere's affair has much to fear;  
I must let him know what's going on here!

*(LIGHTS DIM, MOMENTARILY, as CLEANTE exits. ORGON and MARIANE take their places, then LIGHTS UP.)*

## **ACT II; Scene One**

ORGON

Now, Mariane...

MARIANE

Yes, father? My, you're looking rather spiffy.  
A welcome change. You often do pontiffy...

ORGAN

What? Is that a word?

MARIANE

Pontificate, I mean.

ORGON

That may be so, but never mind.  
I want to share a secret if you're inclined  
to listen. *(ORGON looks here and there.)*

MARIANE

But what are you looking for?

*(ORGON finds the wooden door behind the screen is ajar.)*

ORGON

I'm just removing this door-stopper  
To make sure there's no eavesdropper. *(Does so)*  
Now we're fine. Sweetheart, I love you dearly

ORGON, *Continued*

Although you've been behaving rather—cavalierly.  
You shop all day for shoes and shawls;  
Then you waste the evening in dancing halls.

MARIANE

Oh really! When you go on like this you're such a pill—

ORGON

But this gadding about—will you never get your fill?

MARIANE

You're making me ill. (*Sighs; turns away*) You're being unfair.  
Now what is the secret you were going to share?

ORGON

Your, marriage, dear—

MARIANE

(*Turns back, eagerly*) Oh, you know I love Valere.

ORGON

Um-hmm....(*Beat*) But will you swear to follow my advice

In matters of the heart?

MARIANE

Swear? That's too broad a pledge,  
Like a five course dinner—  
I'd rather *a la carte*.

ORGON

But—

MARIANE

Father dear, you're quite unlike my generation.  
As you age, you all demand a veneration  
That today's youth are not prepared to give.  
We follow few restraints, it's live and let live.  
We don't look to a fatherly Tom, Dick, or Harry  
To give us permission to neck or to marry.

ORGON

(*Confused*) Did you say—neck?

MARIANE

Nevertheless, I have my obligations to fulfill  
As your loving daughter—and I always will.

*(DORINE enters quietly and sits where ORGON cannot see her.)*

## ACT II; Scene Two

ORGON

Well spoken, dear. Now tell me—and don't stand aloof—  
What would you say about Tartuffe?

MARIANE

Who, me?

ORGON

Yes, you.

MARIANE

Well... *(Beat)* I'll say of him—anything you please.

ORGON

Suppose he came to you on bended knees,  
Proposing that the two of you should wed?

MARIANE

*(Stunned)* What's that you said?

ORGON

This match will bring you every joy you long for;  
A match you'll daily, gaily, sing a song for.  
You'll live together, in your precious love,  
Like two sweet children, like two turtle-doves.

MARIANE

*(Astonished)* You can't be serious—surely it's a joke  
That I should wed Tartuffe! I'd sooner croak.  
What gave you this idea? Does he have a crush on me?  
I'm just eighteen; he ought to marry someone forty-three,  
At least. At any rate, I will not wed the pompous beast!

ORGON

What? (*Beat*) You're telling me—I fought in France  
Against the Hun. If some young fancy-pants  
Had disobeyed my order he'd be shot  
For insurrection. Army discipline would rot  
If orders weren't obeyed—you understand?  
You must do as I command.

MARIANE

I do not mean to disregard your service  
But I think your shell-shock's back—you make me nervous!  
We're not in trenches now, engulfed in slaughter,  
And I am not your dough-boy but your daughter!  
Nor can you have me shot as a deserter!  
In peacetime all would call that act a murder!

ORGON

I misspoke in my anger; let's not fight...  
But as your father, I have certain rights!

MARIANE

And women have rights too, must I repeat?  
Arranging marriages is obsolete!  
You cannot sell your girl like she's your goat!  
These are the Twenties! We even have the vote!

ORGON

I am aghast! You spurn your father's wishes?  
Are you an evolutionist too?  
Do you think that man evolved from fishes?

MARIANE

Isn't that beside the point?

ORGON

Mariane, if you don't here and now repent,  
I'll cut you off without a cent!  
Wed Valere and live in poverty--

MARIANE

Or wed Tartuffe and live in luxury?  
The man has *nothing* but what he's got from you!

ORGON

And I will give him more, before I'm through!  
I'll join him to our family, give him pride!  
For that to happen, you must be his bride...

MARIANE

Now you're being so simplistic;  
Valere's a noble, gentle man. Be realistic--  
I can tell you that it just won't work--  
You can't betroth me to your saintly jerk!

ORGON

But you must, Mariane! It is your duty to me!

*(DORINE, who has been listening privately, now interrupts)*

DORINE

So, now we're back to duty, are we?

ORGON

*(Surprised)* What are you doing there, Dorine?  
Eavesdropping? Is your curiosity so keen?

DORINE

Well, I declare! Who invented this appalling rumor—  
Tartuffe and Mariane to wed? Someone with a crazy sense of humor?  
I had heard something about this muddled match—  
Thankfully an egg that never hatched—

ORGON

What? Is the thing so incredible?

DORINE

I gag on it, sir, surely it's inedible  
But I'm not feeling any real alarm.  
I wouldn't think you'd do your only daughter  
That much harm.

ORGON

What I have said to her is quite sincere.

DORINE

From what I've heard, your daughter has no fear  
That you will carry out your plan.

ORGON

Oh no? She had better resolve to marry that man!  
Dorine, I've had enough of you! (*Grabs at her*)

DORINE

(*Dodging him*) But I'm just getting started—I'm not through!  
How can you ditch your girl's desire,  
And treat her like she's auctioned to a buyer!  
You're touting Tartuffe—but what do you gain?  
Surely this divided household gives you pain.  
And you're a man of some renown;  
Wouldn't it stick in your craw  
To have this wretched vagabond for a son-in-law?

ORGON

Quiet, hussy! The household will unite around this match,  
And come to see Tartuffe as quite a catch!

DORINE

Can't you see it's pure insanity  
To force on her his odious vanity?

ORGON

Strong words, Dorine but not so nice!

DORINE

You might do worse than follow my advice.

ORGON

Pipe down! (*To MARIANE*) It's true, dear daughter there,  
I had promised you to young Valere;  
But first, they tell me he's inclined to gamble  
With gentlemen of no renown; and then,  
I fear his faith is not quite sound;  
According to my research,  
He's hardly ever found at church.

DORINE

To me it's quite obscene to bathe and preen,  
And then run to worship just to be seen.

ORGON

Quiet, Dorine! You've no say in the matter—  
Perhaps you'll find employment with that hatter

ORGON, *Continued*

On Witcome Street. Stop interrupting, hold your tongue;  
Control yourself—you're far too high strung

*(Every time ORGON turns to address his daughter, DORINE interrupts.)*

DORINE

If I make bold, sir, 'tis for your own good.

ORGON

I'll tell you when and where you should! *(Turns away)*

DORINE

But, sir—

ORGON

*(Turns back, angrily)* You hussy! Won't you be still? *(Turns away)*

DORINE

No, I'll finish when I will.

ORGON

*(Turns back)* Imbecile, your ignorance is immense! *(Turns away)*

DORINE

I can't remember when *you've* ever been so dense!  
But all right then, you win—mum's the word—

ORGON

*(Turns back)* Good. *(Turns away)*

DORINE

For now—

ORGON

*(Turns back)* I heard! *(Turns away)*

DORINE

But I'll go mad if—

ORGON

*(Turns back)* I'm speaking to my daughter—

DORINE

Excellent. I really think you oughter!

ORGON

*(To MARIANE)* Though he's no Atlas or Apollo,  
Tartuffe is well enough endowed  
To make you very very very proud.

DORINE

Endowed indeed! He's never off his feed,  
I've never ever seen such a plump and sturdy steed.

ORGON

*(Back to DORINE)* So, nothing that I say has any weight?

DORINE

Your empty words won't carry any freight.

ORGON

Oh no? Well you're a lucky girl. It's only by God's grace  
That I haven't yet slapped you in the face.

DORINE

*(Turning away)* Your daughter first, I'll wait in line.

ORGON

What was that?

DORINE

Just talking to myself. I'm fine.

ORGON

That's good... *(Threatening her)* Just one more word...I—

*(ORGON stands ready to strike DORINE and, each time he speaks to his daughter, he glances toward DORINE, as if daring her to interrupt; but SHE just stands there, smirking.)*

ORGON

Daughter, you must comply.  
Consider the husband I have chosen....  
A remarkably kind and caring man, almost—ambrosian.  
*(To DORINE)* Why don't you talk to yourself?

DORINE

Nothing to say.

ORGON

*(Tempting her)* Just one word?

DORINE

Oh no. I'm nobody's fool.

ORGON

Oh, I forgot. (*Sarcastically*) You've been to finishing school!

(*Beat; then, to MARIANE who's been pouting:*)

Mariane, you must trust *me*, not Dorine.

MARIANE

But, Father, I don't like your scheme!

DORINE

(*Exasperated*) I think I'm going to scream!

(*ORGON tries to slap her; she ducks, and he misses her. DORINE runs into the house and we hear a loud frustrated scream.*)

ORGON

Good riddance! What a floozy, that Dorine!

MARIANE

She's not so bad... Much better than she might have been.

ORGON

That's what you think. She gets under my skin.

I can't discuss things in the state I'm in.

I'm so flustered by her brazen talk

I need some exercise. I'll take a walk.

(*ORGON exits, and LIGHTS DIM, BRIEFLY. MARIANE sits heavily, brooding for a moment. Then DORINE returns. SHE sighs, then smiles.*)

## **ACT II; Scene Three**

DORINE

I needed that!

MARIANE

(*Embracing her*) Oh, Dorine, can you believe this mess?

I don't know how to handle all this stress.

I truly love my father, but here lately,

He's not been in his right mind!

DORINE

The way he treats *you* makes me very ill;  
As to Valere—I think he loves you quite a lot;  
Do you love him well enough to foil your father's plot?

MARIANE

And how! I'm so lonely when he goes away;  
I need his tender touch and laughter every day.

DORINE

But can you be sure it's no flirtation,  
But a very genuine, sincere devotion?

MARIANE

Dorine, you wrong me greatly if you doubt it;  
I treasure his love, Dorine, I cannot live without it.

DORINE

So you adore him?

MARIANE

Devotedly. Dorine, he's the bee's knees!

DORINE

Go easy on the slang now, please. (*Beat*)  
Does he return your adoration? How?

MARIANE

With hugs and kisses. He says that I'm the cat's meow!

DORINE

But as to marriage, a daring act indeed—are you both eager,  
Though your income at the present time be meager?

MARIANE

Absolutely.

DORINE

But there's this other match, and what's your plan to be?

MARIANE

I'll kill myself, if such a thing is forced on me.

DORINE

*(Sarcastically)* Oh, goody! I wish that idea had been mine  
Just die, and everything will turn out fine.  
It's the perfect remedy for your present pain,  
It's the best solution since Abel killed Cain.  
*(Aside)* Or was it the other way round?

MARIANE

I cannot wed Tartuffe, I love Valere!  
And Father forcing choices isn't fair!

DORINE

Your Dad's a robust, healthy man, I'd say;  
It'll be years before his will comes into play.

MARIANE

Not just his will...

DORINE

Well, what then, Mariane?

MARIANE

There is a Trust set up for me. The Plan  
Begins at twenty to fund a year in France,  
Taking classes in painting, drama, dance...

DORINE

To launch your art career! And... Valere?

MARIANE

He'd get a job in finance "over there!"  
But if my father takes away that Trust  
We couldn't make the trip—and we just *must!*  
*(MARIANE collapses with sobbing)*

DORINE

It seems you have to live as rather poor...  
Or marry what your father's got in store!

MARIANE

Don't say it, Dorine! You see that I'm mortified!

DORINE

You can't decide? You'll be—Tartuffified!  
Poor little rich girl, if you can't be brave  
You'll soon be married to that knave!

MARIANE

*(SHE wails)* Oh, you're leaving me in such a state!  
Have you no interest in my fate?  
*(Beat...MARIANE sadly turns away)*  
Well, there's one resort for all my worries--

DORINE

Oh, bosh! Come back here now, what's your hurry?  
*(MARIANE turns back.)*  
Don't do something stupid--  
*(MARIANE, offended, starts to cry...)*  
And don't bawl!  
I will take pity on you, after all!  
Although you drive me mad, you're still my friend.  
I will help, and all your sorrow mend.

MARIANE

Oh, Dorine! *(And THEY embrace.)*

DORINE

Dear Mariane! My flighty flapper!

## ACT II: Scene Four

*(VALERE ENTERS. MARIANE sees him, and perks up.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

Well, look who's here...and aren't you looking dapper?

MARIANE

Oh, Valere!

VALERE

*(Beat, VALERE stares at MARIANE)*  
I've heard a piece of quite disturbing news.  
I don't know if it's true--  
It may be nothing but a ruse.

MARIANE

Yes?

VALERE

About your marriage—to Tartuffe..

MARIANE

Oh yes...my Father conceived of this—design.

VALERE

Your father told me you would soon be *mine!*

MARIANE

Yes, but he's changed his mind now, don't you see,  
And has proposed another plan to me.

VALERE

What, seriously?

MARIANE

Why, yes...he insisted.

VALERE

And what is your opinion? Will  
You resist it?

MARIANE

*(Shrugs)* I don't know.

VALERE

That's a fine answer! You don't know?

MARIANE

I just don't know! Well? What would you advise?

VALERE

*(Surprised)* My advice? *(Beat)* Well, marry him—if you think it wise!

MARIANE

*(Astonished)* That's your advice?

VALERE

It is!

MARIANE

And you mean it?

VALERE

I said so, didn't I?

MARIANE

I'd not foreseen it!

VALERE

*(Still irked)* He is a worthy, splendid choice.

MARIANE

*(Supressing her anger.)* Well then. I have no objections to voice.  
I shall take your kind advice.

VALERE

You'll have no trouble taking it---that's nice.

MARIANE

No less you in giving it, my dear.

VALERE

I give it only to oblige, see here!

MARIANE

And I shall take it only to oblige you now!

DORINE

*(Aside)* A lover's quarrel? This will be fun, somehow!

MARIANE

You told me, sir, I should obey my father  
And that I mean to do. I wouldn't bother,  
If I were you, to call on me again.

VALERE

Oh no, I'm not your friend.  
And don't expect me to carry a torch  
While you're in another's arms, on another's porch!  
It's a hard and sober lesson that I've learned,  
That a man's love can be so easily spurned.  
It seems you never cared for *this (meaning himself)* young man!

MARIANE

You're free to think so, Valere, if you can.

VALERE

I'm free—oh yes, I am!--in several ways!  
You're not the only girl to catch my gaze.  
I'm sure I'll find more kindness in another....  
And no, I am not speaking of my mother.

MARIANE

I didn't say—

VALERE

Perhaps not, but you thought it!  
I can read your mind—have you forgot it?

MARIANE

Then read this, “Mighty Mesmer”—we are *through!*

VALERE

*(Beat) You don't mean that!*

MARIANE

Oh yes I do!

VALERE

Fine, then—let this denouement transpire!  
I'm inclined to do as you desire!  
*(HE turns and takes a step as if to leave...)*

MARIANE

Go, then! It won't be me who cries “Alas!”

VALERE

*(Turning back)* Remember, 'twas you who drove me to this pass!  
*(Turns to go)* I'm out of here!

MARIANE

Vamoose, Valere. Get lost!

VALERE

I will! *(Looking back)* And 'twill be you who counts the cost!

MARIANE

Don't write to me: I will not read your note!

VALERE

I won't write, I'm going. (*But HE doesn't go. Looking about:*) Where's my coat?

MARIANE

You didn't bring one, it's *summer*, Laughing Boy!

VALERE

(*Sarcastically*) I'm glad to know this parting brings you joy!

(*VALERE heads for the exit, then stops and turns before leaving.*)

VALERE, *Continuing*

Huh?

MARIANE

What?

VALERE

You said something?

MARIANE

Not a word.

VALERE

I could have sworn it was your voice I heard.

MARIANE

You're hearing things.

VALERE

I'm not.

MARIANE

It wasn't I.!

VALERE

Well, okay...

MARIANE

So....

VALERE

No....

MARIANE

Good-bye!

*(VALERE starts to exit, then returns)*

VALERE

Are you okay? I thought I heard you cough.

MARIANE

I'm fine! Please *go!*

VALERE

I'm going!

MARIANE

And don't return!

VALERE

*(Sarcastically)* Forgive me for expressing my concern!

MARIANE

If you don't leave, then I will!

VALERE

Then we'll *both* go!

*(VALERE storms toward his exit; MARIANE starts toward the house. Hastily, DORINE interrupts.)*

DORINE

No, no, no, no, NO!  
I've let you play this to the bitter end,  
But you're both nuts! You've gone beyond the bend!  
Mister Valere!

VALERE

What do you want, Dorine?

DORINE

Come here!

VALERE

Don't hinder me from doing what *she* wants!

DORINE

Oh, Valere—now don' be such a dunce!

VALERE

I'm fixed, resolved, and I will leave!

DORINE

And I find that very hard to believe!

MARIANE

My presence annoys that silly goose .  
I'd better leave as well, and set him loose.

*(MARIANE turns to go, but DORINE runs to stop her.)*

DORINE

Silly girl! *(Grabbing her)* Give up!

MARIANE

Let go! *(Making a show of resistance)* Let me be free!

DORINE

*(Pulling her)* Come back here! Don't glare at me!

MARIANE

No, we're through. It's hopeless, you see!

VALERE

Let her be gone. It's clear she hates the sight of me!

*(VALERE turns to go and DORINE runs after him now.)*

DORINE

What balderdash, you two! Deuces wild!  
Now stop you two. You're both behaving like a child!

*(SHE pulls first one, then the other, towards Center stage.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

Let's get this resolved. *(To VALERE:)* Are you quite mad, to quarrel with her now?

VALERE

Did you hear what she said, that bow-wow?

DORINE

*(To MARIANE:)* Are you insane, to get up such a passion?

MARIANE

He's behaving in a horrid fashion!

DORINE

Fools, both of you. *(To VALERE:)* She thinks of nothing else but you.

I can vouch for it.

*(To MARIANE:)* And he loves no one else,  
and longs to marry you. I'd stake my life on it.

MARIANE

*(To VALERE:)* Why did you give me such advice then,  
Screwy Loouey?

VALERE

*(To MARIANE:)* Why ask for my advice on such a matter,  
Pitter-patter?

DORINE

You both are seriously sappy.

Now give me your hands and be happy.

*(To VALERE:)* Come, yours. *(VALERE does so.)*

*(To MARIANE:)* Now, yours. *(MARIANE does so)*

Back off, you two, get off the brink--

Your love is so much stronger than you think!

*(SHE puts their hands together, turns away. MARIANE AND VALERE stand holding hands without looking at each other.)*

MARIANE

You started it!

VALERE

No, you!

*(Turning,,they stand face to face. The following exchange will go rapidly, punctuated with light, almost tender slaps to the fce of the other timed to the childish regrets:)*

MARIANE

*(Slap) You!*

VALERE

*(Slap) You!*

MARIANE

*(Slap) You!*

VALERE

*(Slap) You!*

MARIANE

*(Slap) You!*

DORINE

Enough!

*(THEY freeze, gazing at each other; then fall into each others' arms.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

Now, hugging's nice but one thing's missing--  
That's the kissing!

*VALERE and MARIANE do a long kiss. DORINE walks around the pair, then winks at the audience. SHE feigns being stern.)*

DORINE

Hey, the bank's closed! That's enough necking!  
I just thought I'd see some light cheek-pecking!  
Now *concentrate!* We need to thwart this plan,  
Or else you end up wedded to the wrong man.  
I'm talking to *you*, Mariane!

MARIANE

I won't! I swear!

DORINE

Hush! I think that you should feign consent  
And do ask your father to relent.  
Just humor him, and slowly, day by day,  
We'll work to block this marriage by delay.  
One day you'll say you cannot choose a dress.  
Another, you'll have intestinal distress.  
Perhaps you broke a mirror in the bath  
Or tell him that a black cat crossed your path.  
Illness, sickness, anything will do!  
You can't be married until you say "I do."  
So Don't! We'll wear him down in time, you'll see.  
Just leave your wedding details all to me!  
*(Beat. SHE begins to usher them off.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

But now you'd better not be seen together,  
No matter what the time of day or weather.

VALERE

We'll treat this like a game of chess.  
The winning move will bring us sure success!

MARIANE

I cannot answer for my father's notions  
But love and honor are the strongest potions.

VALERE

*(To MARIANE)* You thrill me with delight! Whate'er transpires.....

DORINE

*(Aside)* These lovers! There's no end to their desires!  
Get lost, now! You go this way, you go that!

*(DORINE pushes them off, in opposite directions. She wipes her hands and sighs.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

Now to decide on how to skin this cat!

*(DORINE pushes them off, physically, in opposite directions. She wipes her hands of then she sighs, and sits; LIGHTS DIM momentarily; then DAMIS appears, outraged)*

## **ACT III; Scene One**

*(DAMIS enters)*

DAMIS

May lightning strike me dead right here and now  
If I don't get my revenge—and how!  
Nothing and no one shall get in my way—  
I'm going to do something desperate today!

DORINE

Damis, please moderate this towering passion;  
The Great War's over, and it's out of fashion;  
Not all things talked of turn to facts,  
The road is long, sometimes, from plans to acts.

DAMIS

No, no! I shall end this ugly fellow's plots  
Instead of waiting for the rest of you draw lots

DORINE

I think it best if you'd just go away!  
Your wisdom under pressure is—debatable,  
While your step-mother is far more capable  
At handling both your father and Tartuffe.  
Now she has sent for him, on our behalf,  
To sound him on this marriage—don't laugh—  
And whether he's going to wed your sister.  
If so, she plans to tell this feckless mister  
That his plots and ploys are stupid indeed,  
And there's no way in heaven or hell  
That he can possibly, ever, succeed!  
*(looking about)* His man says he's at prayers  
But that he'll soon be down.  
*(pushing DAMIS)* Be gone, alone,  
And let me give the mangy dog his bone.

DAMIS

*(resisting)* But I'll restrain myself. I will not say a word.

DORINE

*(pushing)* No, you'll spoil it. You must not be seen or heard!

DAMIS

But I can hold my tongue. Suppose I hide—

DORINE

*(looking about)* Get lost, Damis! He's coming!

*(DAMIS hides, perhaps below the drum set, as TARTUFFE appears Up Center.)*

## ACT III; Scene Two

*(TARTUFFE enters. As soon as he notices DORINE, he begins speaking loudly to what could be his disciple, offstage—“putting it on” for her benefit.)*

TARTUFFE

Laurent, I'm preaching at the jail today,  
As well as at some bus stops on the way;  
Please pack my soapbox with my notes,  
My Scofield Reference Bible, Bartlett's Quotes,  
The hymnals, songbooks, and accordion,  
My tracts, “The Coming of the Lord Again,”  
And “Countdown to the Start of Tribulation.”  
Pack them in the car and if you're quick,  
We'll still have time to see the sick!

DORINE

Oh brother!

TARTUFFE

What's that?

DORINE

Just that—

TARTUFFE

Oh, Good grief!

*(He takes out a handkerchief and covers her bosom with it. DORINE frowns.)*

DORINE

Is this for me?

TARTUFFE

Please, keep the handkerchief!  
I am—that is...

DORINE

If you're aroused by décolletage  
Then you should lock yourself inside a lodge.  
Are you so easily set on fire? For my part,  
I am slower to desire,  
And if I saw you nude from head to toe,  
Your naked body wouldn't tempt me—noooo!

TARTUFFE

Please demonstrate sufficient modesty  
To hide whatever's there I shouldn't see.

DORINE

No, I'm off.  
The madam of the house will soon be here—  
I gather that you want to speak with Elmire?

TARTUFFE

*(Eyes light up)* Ah, certainly.

DORINE

*(Aside)* I think we've found him out!

TARTUFFE

Will she come now?

DORINE

Soon as her daily duties will allow.

*(ELMIRE appears; DORINE makes a broad “Voilà” gesture, smirks at the Audience, and exits. DAMIS peeks out, then hides again.)*

### **ACT III; Scene Three**

TARTUFFE

Madam, may heaven's grace abound,  
And keep your soul—and body—safe and sound.  
So may your days be ever blessed with love;  
This prayer I offer to the Lord above.

ELMIRE

My word, I never heard such a stately prayer.  
But do sit down, good sir. Please take a chair.

*(TARTUFFE seats ELMIRE, then himself.)*

TARTUFFE

I trust your recent fever didn't last?

ELMIRE

Oh no. They fed me; then I undertook a fast.

TARTUFFE

I would gladly part with all my wealth  
To guarantee improvement in your health.  
*(Produces a flask from his coat pocket)*  
But as to that, madam, I would like to ask  
If you will join me—I have a little flask.

ELMIRE

What, the preacher doesn't honor Prohibition?  
Don't you find that contradicts your mission?

TARTUFFE

Indeed I don't. For St. Paul said to take  
A little liquor for the stomach's sake.  
He surely made a fortunate discovery,  
Which I believe will aid in your recovery.  
*(TARTUFFE takes a sip, and offers it to her. ELMIRE smells it, then takes a full swallow and returns the flask to him.)*

ELMIRE

Thank you sir. I don't ordinarily imbibe  
This early in the day. But it cannot be denied  
That I enjoy a little something now and then.  
But I must ask you where you got this hooch, and when?

TARTUFFE

My supplier of communion wine  
Tossed this is extra—said it would be fine  
For someone like myself, in my profession,  
To share as needed, using great discretion.

ELMIRE

Ah, so. But I wanted to speak with you privately  
On a matter of great concern to me.  
Fortunately there's no one around to listen.

TARTUFFE

I love it when your eyes sparkle and your lips glisten  
As they do now. Madam, I am so elated!  
I could drink your beauty for hours and never be sated!

ELMIRE

Aha. I merely wish a simple word from you,  
A statement of your intentions, candid and true.

*(DAMIS, without their seeing him, shows his face but stays in hiding.)*

TARTUFFE

I too could wish, as Heaven's special favor,  
To lay my soul quite open to my savior.  
*(Edging closer; taking her hand)*  
The fact of my attraction to your charms  
Is not meant to do you any harm;  
Instead, my deepening emotion  
Stems from a passionate, yet pure devotion.

ELMIRE

*(Pulls away)* Oh yes, I understand. I always knew  
It's only my salvation that concerns you.  
*(TARTUFFE presses her arm)* Ouch! That's pain I feel!

TARTUFFE

*(Withdrawing his hand)* I'm sorry—just an excess of zeal!  
I wouldn't hurt you for the world, my dear.  
Certainly not someone I so deeply revere.  
And I'd as soon—

*(TARTUFFE puts his hand on her knee.)*

ELMIRE

But what's your hand doing there?

TARTUFFE

Your gown's so soft. Material beyond compare.

ELMIRE

Please stop, I beg you. I am very ticklish.

*(SHE moves her chair, or otherwise shifts her location, but HE moves closer.)*

TARTUFFE

*(Handling the collar or the lace of her dress)*  
They have such competent craftsmen in this trade—  
The finest clothes were never better made.

ELMIRE

*(Removing his hand)* But let us come to terms. I've heard  
That my husband means to break his word  
And marry Mariane to you. Is it true?

TARTUFFE

*(Stammering)* No, no. Well, perhaps. He hinted once at such a thing,  
But such a match, madam, would never ever bring  
Me joy. I find in someone else a sensual charm  
That steeps my love and causes some alarm.

ELMIRE

You cannot mean--

TARTUFFE

My *affection* for things above  
Does not eradicate more earthly loves.

*(TARTUFFE makes his move; ELMIRE takes evasive action during his speech, while he tries to corner her. The result is an amusing chase about the stage.)*

TARTUFFE, *Continuing*

On your fair countenance is such beauty displayed  
It dazzled my eyes beyond jewels or jade;  
Such virtue and loveliness in you is sealed  
As God's grandest gifts are in you revealed.  
I could not look on you, the perfect creature,  
Without admiring nature's great Creator.

*(TARTUFFE makes another move, but ELMIRE evades him)*

ELMIRE

In love you are indeed most enterprising,  
But truly, it is quite a bit surprising.  
You might have meditated more at first  
Instead of permitting your heart to burst,  
And considered the results that might accrue  
From actions that you may well later rue.

TARTUFFE

Dear one, I'm no angel, don't you see?  
It's you that brings the devil out in me!  
Your batting eyes have given me good reason  
To think that you will want me in due season.  
Perhaps you find me but a worthless knave;  
But it's mainly your sweet soul I crave.

ELMIRE

*(Disbelieving)* Really?

TARTUFFE

*(Up close, almost whispering)*

No matter when and where we choose to meet,  
I pledge to be in every way discrete;  
So you will find, with hearts like ours sincere,  
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

ELMIRE

Well, I shall not discuss the matter in this house  
Nor reveal your indiscretions to my spouse;  
But, in return, I'll ask but one thing merely,  
That you promote, quite frankly and sincerely,  
The marriage of Valere to Mariane,  
And that you—

*(DAMIS interrupts, agitated, leaving his hiding place)*

### **ACT III; Scene Four**

DAMIS

I've heard all of this I can!  
This must be publicized! This man must be outed!  
I overheard it all: this house must be de-louted!  
He speaks of God. Well, let God be my guide  
To bring about the downfall of his pride!  
We'll undeceive my father and disclose  
The defect of the emperor's new clothes!

TARTUFFE

*(Deeply disturbed)* Now son, let's not be so quick to create strife!

DAMIS

But I caught you making love to Father's wife!

TARTUFFE

You'd tell him that?

DAMIS

I would, sir, absolutely!

ELMIRE

Dear boy,, don't speak so resolutely!  
You have that adolescent anger to release;  
But you're jumping to conclusions...  
Things here are not as bad as they may seem.

DAMIS

II saw and heard! I swear this is no dream!

ELMIRE

You hold your tongue, no matter what you've heard  
Because, Damis, I gave this man my word.

DAMIS

I say it's time Tartuffe should leave this house,  
His tail between his legs, meek as a mouse!  
He's crossed my sister's love and mine as well---  
He's earned himself a front-row seat in hell!

ELMIRE

Now that's a bit too strong--

DAMIS

The man's a fraud,  
Disrespecting laws of man and God  
And I can't wait to---Here comes father now!  
(*To TARTUFFE*) You'd better scrape and bow!

(*TARTUFFE turns away, trying to compose himself. ORGON enters.*)

## **ACT III; Scene Five**

DAMIS

Father, we've news to herald your arrival.  
It's quite surprising, and altogether novel.  
You've been repaid for your kind and loving care,  
By this fine gentleman, standing over there.  
(*Discomposed, TARTUFFE shifts position.*)  
The man rewards your hospitality  
With the grossest kind of disloyalty!  
His goal is not honorable; instead, he seeks no less  
Than to seduce your wife—as he must now confess!  
I've just now heard him coming on to her! His zeal  
Is hardly godly—it's stirred by sex appeal!

ORGON

*(Sputtering)* What? You say—

DAMIS

She insisted that the matter be concealed  
But I believe it has to be revealed!

ELMIRE

*(Intervening)* Damis would not have spoken had he heeded my advice.  
The boy is bold indeed, but in some ways very weak,  
And he should learn to count the cost before he speaks.  
As for me, a woman's honor does not hang on telling;  
She must calmly keep the peace within her dwelling.  
Let matters take their course; she can defend herself  
Against a Casanova in a Trojan horse!

*(ELMIRE turns on her heel, exits to Interior.)*

### **ACT III; Scene Six**

ORGON

What's this? It all sounds Greek to me!

DAMIS

This man is not the man you think you see!

ORGON

I simply don't believe it!

TARTUFFE

*(Abjectly)* Show me the door--  
I don't deserve to live here any more!  
Damis is right in everything he's said.  
I am the prince of sinners: you're misled.  
Orgon. I've wounded you and I'm to blame,  
No other. I'm ashamed of my own name.  
So drive me like a villain from your house  
And treat me as you would a common louse!

ORGON

*(To DAMIS)* Damis, you dare, with something so untrue,  
To stain the purity of his virtue?

DAMIS

What, father? The man feigns meekness and remorse,  
And you let him ride you like a horse?

ORGON

Silence! Child of mine, I'll disinherit  
Unless you respect this just man's merit!

TARTUFFE

But he's your only son, don't be as hard as nails.  
You'd do far better to believe his tales.  
Why should you favor me in this affair?  
I've come and made your home into my lair.  
You should not let appearances deceive,  
I'm anything but what your heart tells you to believe.  
Although all men see me as a godly creature,  
In fact I'm nothing but a worthless lecher.  
*(TARTUFFE kneels before DAMIS.)*  
Heap on me names yet more detestable,  
For I deserve them all—indeed,  
I have committed crimes for which I am—arrestable.  
I'll bear this ignominy on my knees  
To expiate my guilt and shame *(To ORGON)*—please!

ORGON

*(Grabbing TARTUFFE)* Ah brother, 'tis too much!  
*(To DAMIS)* You'll not relent?

DAMIS

"Tis too much," Father? What?

TARTUFFE

*(Praying)* God, I repent!

ORGON

*(To TARTUFFE)* Rise Brother, I beg you.  
*(To DAMIS)* You infamous villain! Scoundrel!

DAMIS

Can it be that—

TARTUFFE

*(Praying)* I'm just a mangy mongrel!

ORGON

Oh no you're not! *(To DAMIS)* Villain!

DAMIS

But father, surely he has shown—

ORGON

I'll break your every bone—

DAMIS

His treachery!

*(ORGON smacks his son in anger; TARTUFFE feigns concern.)*

TARTUFFE

For God's sake, don't be angry with the boy  
Who was once, I'm sure, your pride and joy.  
I'd sooner endure his base and baseless attack,  
Than see you take a rod and break his back.

ORGON

*(To DAMIS)* Ungrateful son!

TARTUFFE

*(Kneeling by ORGON)* Stop! Upon my knees, I ask you please—  
I beg you pardon him—his reckless living.

*(ORGON throws himself upon his knees, embracing TARTUFFE.)*

ORGON

Good Lord, how can you still be so—forgiving?  
*(To DAMIS)* Behold his goodness!

DAMIS

But father—

ORGON

*(Rising in anger)* Be still, Damis! I know the cause of this attack.  
You hate Tartuffe because he has the honor that you lack.  
But the more you plot to rid yourselves of him,  
The more I mean to let him stay within.  
You take recourse to every shameful trick  
To heap your calumny upon Tartuffe.  
You're sick, all of you—son, servants, and even my wife,  
Ready with the knife to take his life!

DAMIS

Can't you see, father, that you've been betrayed?

ORGON

As master of the house I still will be obeyed!  
You rogue, get down upon your knees,  
Retract your ugly words and beg his pardon,  
Or be expelled like Adam from the Garden.

DAMIS

What? Ask pardon of that cheating fraud?  
I'd sooner leave my home and go abroad.

ORGON

And that you shall, my boy, if that's your wish.  
Waste your life in Trinidad, beach-combing, catching fish,  
And chasing girls among the dunes. But if you should return,  
Tired, repentant, gaunt from hunger and admitting that I've won—  
I'll not play loving father to a prodigal son.

TARTUFFE

*(Remonstrating)* Oh, dear brother—

DAMIS

Exiled to Trinidad? Father, I'm a drummer!  
What a pleasant place to spend the summer!  
Cruising to Tobago, Trinidad--  
Steel drums and calypso—what could be so bad?  
But American jazz is what is in my soul,  
So, if I were to pursue my highest goal,  
I'd pack up for Chicago, take off on a drive,  
And try out for Armstrong's new Hot five!

ORGON

There's only colored people in that band.

DAMIS

So what? I'd be a rebel—take a stand!

ORGON

But to play drums for your career? It's almost off the list.  
You can't make a living as a jazz percussionist.

DAMIS

I'll bet I will!

ORGON

I'll take that bet!

TARTUFFE

Dear brother, don't do something you'll regret.

ORGON

As of this moment you are not my son!  
You'd best be off my land when day is done  
Or be arrested for trespass!

DAMIS

*(DAMIS checks his wallet)* I've got enough for gas!  
I'll load my drums up in the Model T...

*(DAMIS heads for his drum set. ORGON intervenes)*

ORGON

Oh no! You'll take nothing that belongs to me!

DAMIS

I bought the drums!

ORGON

And I bought the car.

DAMIS

But it's three hundred miles!

ORGON

That's mighty far.  
You'd better start walking!

DAMIS

You;d better stop talking!

*(ORGON slaps DAMIS)*

ORGON

You want another?

DAMIS

*(Posturing)* I'll turn the cheek.  
*(Beat)* Oh Father, you're such a moron!

ORGON

Don't trouble me with adolescent jargon.  
Out, I say! I hereby disinherit you, and  
Throw my curse, as well, into the bargain.

*(DAMIS stomps out.)*

### **ACT III; Scene Seven**

ORGON

*(Approaching TARTUFFE)* Brother, let me help you to your feet.

TARTUFFE

My friend! You've thrown your own son in the street!

ORGON

To see my son insult a saintly man of God  
Makes me regret my sparing of the rod!  
I've been too soft on all of them I fear...  
From this day forth, I vow to be severe!

TARTUFFE

But won't you, as our Lord has taught, forgive?

ORGON

Mercy enough! I've let the poor wretch live!  
I threw him out, but still he thinks he's won.

TARTUFFE

Oh, call him back! He is your only son.

ORGON

A son like that all fathers should eschew  
When they could have a son-in-law like you!

TARTUFFE

Oh no, I see what troubles I have brought.  
Where once was peace, now family feuds are fought  
All over me! It pains my anxious heart!  
And so, dear friend, I think I must depart...

ORGON

No, friend!

TARTUFFE

Oh yes, it's clear they hate me here—  
Damis, Dorine, Cleante, even Elmire;  
They question everything that I believe,  
And say I wear religion on my sleeve.  
And though you know I'm pure, chaste, and devout  
They will not cease to try to make you doubt.  
And though you do your best to not give in,  
They are your flesh and blood, and they will win.

ORGON

You think me weak of will and double-minded?

TARTUFFE

The strongest of all men was bound and blinded  
When he began to trust a woman's word—  
*(Takes the pose of Samson)*  
Like children, they're best seen and never heard.

ORGON

It's true, my wife will whisper things to me...  
My daughter clouds my mind so I can't see...  
Cleante beguiles with cunning arguments  
And Dorine annoys me with her nonsense!  
They stir me 'till I'm plagued with indecision—

TARTUFFE

And people perish where there is no vision!

ORGON

You've diagnosed my illness; what's the cure?

TARTUFFE

You must defy them! Stand and be a man!

ORGON

I will! But help me still—what should be our plan?

TARTUFFE

You must be bold! And put your faith in action!  
Break free of them and gain yourself some traction;  
The road to heaven is a long and hard one,  
It takes much cash—

ORGON

What's that? I beg your pardon?

TARTUFFE

I mean, of course, to gain eternal treasure  
You must give up some things that bring you pleasure;  
Material wealth and riches hold you back—

ORGON

You're right! And I must go on the attack!  
I'll liquidate my assets, give to the church;  
That will knock them all from their safe perch,  
Shake them up, and make them think of heaven!  
What's more, I'll take an axe to this estate!  
Cut down the vineyards, tear up—

TARTUFFE

You'll what? No, wait!

ORGON

I've often thought of Sister Carrie Nation,  
How she took on the trade in fermentation.  
I've felt the Spirit's prompting to the task  
To empty out my cellars cask by cask,  
To split the wood and pour the contents out.  
This is my calling, without a doubt!

TARTUFFE

*(Disturbed)* You think that wise?

ORGON

What? Don't you think

Our nation's greatest danger's devil's drink?  
Children go hungry, their mothers sing the blues  
Because their fathers blow their pay on booze.  
And though I once regretted Prohibition  
I'm God's man now, and gladly join the mission  
Of ridding the world of this foul temptation,  
Campaigning for a dryer, holier nation!  
I would have done this long ago, with glee—  
Except my family kept distracting me!

TARTUFFE

*(Feigning agreement)* Oh, I agree that hooch is Satan's brew,  
And you are right in what you mean to do.

TARTUFFE, *Continued*

But wisdom must be urged in this endeavor  
Lest you regret the results forever.  
When you break your casks and let the liquor flow  
Did you ever think of where it all will go?  
Into the groundwater—alcoholic leaks,  
Polluting every neighbor's well and creek.  
In thinking you will rid the world of sin  
You'll get the whole town drunk—then who will win?

ORGON

The Devil! My, he *is* a crafty beast!

TARTUFFE

I'd put this plan on hold a month, at least,  
Until we can explore the situation.

ORGON

But hesitating gives me such frustration!  
You said I must be bold!

TARTUFFE

But also wise,  
Or you will fall into the Devil's lies!

ORGON

But time is short!

TARTUFFE

These are the latter days,  
But you'll admit that there are better ways  
To spend one's time than working mass destruction—  
There's evangelism! And Bible instruction!  
You could join me preaching at the jail!

ORGON

But what of all *this*?

TARTUFFE

Put it up for sale!  
Or, better yet, make it a donation  
To some wise soul who, with God's inspiration  
Can best decide how to dispense with it  
Or use it for the Kingdom's benefit.

ORGON

But you're the wisest person that I know,  
And if I gave it all to you, you'd just say "No."

TARTUFFE

Well...if you cannot think of another...

ORGON

Oh, would you please accept the gift, my brother?  
It's such a burden on my weary mind,  
What to do with all these things I find  
That weigh me down, keeping my thoughts on earth,  
When they should be on heaven and its worth.  
If you would take it all, I'd be elated,  
No longer dour and frustrated  
If you accept my gift then I will speak  
To my lawyer, when I'm there next week.

TARTUFFE

If the property causes so much strain,  
Why wait a week to mitigate the pain?  
It can't take that long to write a deed of gift;  
Laurent was once a lawyer, and he's swift!  
I'll have him make it out for you to sign  
This afternoon, before dinnertime.

TARTUFFE

But wait! What will your family say?

ORGON

It matters not! I'm following God's way!  
And they will follow too, or like Damis,  
I'll send them off—and that without valise!  
*(Beat...Anxiously; begging TARTUFFE)*  
How I do value your counsel and grace;  
You must stay here with us—I insist!  
Without your wise counsel I cannot exist!

TARTUFFE

*(Smiling kindly)* All right, I'll stay for now, if you insist.

*(ORGON embraces TARTUFFE. Beat. TARTUFFE walks away, pondering this.)*

TARTUFFE, *Continuing*

Our friendship bids me to forestall suspicion;  
I'll avoid your wife and focus on my mission.

ORGON

No, no! You shall haunt her, just to spite them all.  
I'm fed up with their obnoxious gall.  
You'll be seen together at all hours,  
Inside and out, among the bowers and flowers.

TARTUFFE

Are you quite sure? It will create division—

ORGON

I'm very sure. I'm through with indecision.  
(*ORGON hugs TARTUFFE, happily*) So, then...  
You will accept my gift? The deed is done?

TARTUFFE

(*Posturing—gazing up as if he hears a Voice*)  
God's will be done in everything, my son!

ORGON

(*Aside, to Audience*) What a man—never thinks of himself,  
While my family just covets my wealth.  
(*Taking TARTUFFE by the arm*) Come, friend;  
We'll hurry now to draw the deed aright,  
And then let envy burst itself with spite!

(*ORGON and TARTUFFE do a little jig, then EXIT, briskly, as LIGHTS FADE OUT.*)

**INTERMISSION**

## ACT IV; Scene One

*(Same setting. AT RISE we hear “St. Louis Blues” on the radio. TARTUFFE is sitting in a chair on the edge of the porch. He pulls out his hip flask and takes a swig, then puts it away quickly as ELMIRE wanders in, places a fresh bowl of fruit on the table and idly arranges a few napkins. TARTUFFE slumps to avoid being seen, and ELMIRE EXITS to Interior. MUSIC ENDS as COMMENTATOR BEGINS.)*

RADIO COMMENTATOR, *Recorded Voice*

Good afternoon, folks, it's 4:15 here in good old St. Louis, and you're still in tune with radio station KMOX. That was “St. Louis Blues, written in 1914, and possibly the premiere blues number in this world. *(SFX: TICKERTAPE SOUND, THEN FADES OUT UNDER.)* Now for some breaking news. After his triumphant ticker tape parade in New York City, Mr. Charles Lindbergh has announced that he is planning a grand tour of the forty-eight states, with speeches in over ninety cities. There's speculation as to the exact date he'll be in St. Louis but he... *(Beat)* Hold on—this just in. Police in five states have intensified their search for a prominent Baptist deacon “on the lam.” Six months ago this man embezzled money from a Dallas church, then left Texas, leaving behind some women alleging sexual misconduct. *(TARTUFFE sits up, more alert.)* On the local scene Mr. Orgon, the erstwhile vintner, is hosting a noted biblical scholar whose specialty is the Apocalypse and Armageddon. It's said he's to give a lecture on the subject but its whereabouts are unclear. *(TARTUFFE rises.)* By the way, good friends, don't miss the riverside concert this evening, with some fine musicians from Paul Whiteman's Orchestra!

*(TARTUFFE abruptly turns off the radio. VOICE OUT.)*

## ACT IV; Scene Two

MADAME PERNELLE, *From Off*

*(Calling)* Hello! Is anybody there? Anyone home? *(To an unseen PHILIPPE)* Stay with the car, Philippe. I may need you soon.

*(TARTUFFE, stuffing the flask into his hip pocket as MADAME PERNELLE enters. He helps her up the steps to the porch.)*

TARTUFFE

Madame Pernelle! So nice to see you again!

MADAME PERNELLE

The pleasure is mine. It was only a question of when.  
And you're to give a speech—

TARTUFFE

Just a few remarks about the end time.

MADAME PERNELLE

That's what I came to hear. Your comments will be most sublime.

TARTUFFE

A small gathering at a neighbor's place.  
It belongs to Sadie Lou and Sam deFace.  
If I may coin a phrase, we'll have a godly rally.  
So glad you're coming. The way things are,  
I may well need an ally.

MADAME PERNELLE

They do malign you here! It's tragic!  
I heard about Damis. You must have exercised some magic  
To make him leave the house.

TARTUFFE

No, the one who exorcized that demon was Orgon.  
As to Damis, I'm not so sure he's gone. We'll see.

MADAME PERNELLE

Oh, there's some doubt? Sounds like a mystery,  
Not unlike the matters of the spirit you plan  
To talk about tonight. As for me,  
I'm so delighted that you will be discussing  
Armageddon.

TARTUFFE

There may be some cussing;  
It's not a pleasant subject for the sinners left behind.  
No doubt they'll be consigned to tribulation;  
I'll leave the rest to your imagination.

MADAME PERNELLE

Oh my, oh dear!

TARTUFFE

Take courage, dear heart—have no fear,  
For you and I are blessed as part of Christ's elite—

MADAME PERNELLE

The thought of life in that eternal home—how sweet!  
You know that you can count on me and my son.  
I'll go persuade my grand-daughter to come,  
Along with Orgon, of course, and Elmire.

TARTUFFE

I am in your debt, my dear.

MADAME PERNELLE

Oh no, dear sir. I'm deeply honored to be near  
The one whose earnest faith I most revere.  
Aha! Cleante.

## Act IV, Scene Three

CLEANTE

*(Entering)* Good day, Madam.

MADAME PERNELLE

*(Snubs him)* I was just leaving.  
*(To TARTUFFE)* I'll meet you there in half an hour.

TARTUFFE

To God be the glory and the power! *(Mme. PERNELLE exits.)*

## ACT IV; Scene Four

CLEANTE

Tartuffe, may I have a word with you?

TARTUFFE

I need to leave, a word or two perhaps.  
Your words, I know, can grow to paragraphs!

CLEANTE

I tend to be loquacious, there's no doubt.  
But there's an issue that I'd like to speak about.

TARTUFFE

*(Impatiently)* Yes, yes?

CLEANTE

Your dispute with Damis is the talk of the town.  
Everyone's confounded —most of them frown  
At your behavior. I'm not here as your minion,  
But intend to share, quite frankly, my opinion.

TARTUFFE

*(Impatiently)* Go on!

CLEANTE

For now then, let us suppose the worst—  
That Damis accused you falsely, and should be—cursed?

*(CLEANTE pauses, considering his next words carefully.)*

TARTUFFE

Well? You disagree?

CLEANTE

Should not a Christian pardon this offense  
And stifle in his heart the need for vengeance?  
Should you allow that, for an exchange of bile,  
A son be driven from his father's domicile?  
Leave your malice behind. It should be no bother  
To restore the son to favor with his father.

TARTUFFE

Ah, Cleante, I wish I could fulfill  
All you desire. I bear him no ill will.  
I pardon all, and wish with all my heart  
It hadn't happened. But we must part;  
Orgon is adamant, and will not listen to my pleas,  
Though the earth should shake and hell freeze.  
If Damis returns, then I must take my leave,  
Though it be on Independence Day or Christmas eve.  
If we interact, it will bring scandal.  
What would people think? I can handle  
Much of it, but likely they will attribute to me  
Some nasty scheme—say that, conscious of my guilt  
I feigned a Christian love for my accuser  
In order to buy his silence and make it clear  
That I am not the loser here.

CLEANTE

Really? I say...

TARTUFFE

Say nothing, brother. As for me,  
I will live according to the Lord's design;  
*(Looking to heaven with devout gesture)*  
Oh gracious God, my fealty is Thine.

CLEANTE

You try to put us off with specious phrases  
Whose chain of empty-headed logic amazes  
Me. Shall petty fear of what the world may think  
Prevent the doing of a noble deed?

TARTUFFE

I've made it crystal clear that I forgive Damis,  
And withal I strive to walk God's way to peace.  
But after this day's scandal and Damis' sin,  
Heaven doesn't order me to *live* with him.

CLEANTE

And does it order you to lend your ear  
To the gift suggested by his father here  
So that, to his estate you now make claim,  
Though any judge or jury in the land  
Would decide that *you're* to blame?

TARTUFFE

No one who knows me, sir, and how I live,  
Can say I'm acting from a selfish motive.  
I have no interest in your worldly goods—  
I could live very simply, alone in the woods.  
If I bring myself to take this gift of property  
Which Orgon *insists* I take, I will;  
But only because I fear it will go downhill  
And those to whom it comes will use it ill,  
And not employ it, as is my design,  
To honor God and all that is divine.

CLEANTE

I am astonished that unblushingly  
You could allow such offers to be tendered!  
Does true religion have any maxim, perhaps rare,  
That teaches us to rob the lawful heirs?

TARTUFFE

(*Moving toward the exit*) I find this rather tiresome. It's half-past four,  
and I'm supposed to give a speech.

CLEANTE

A speech, you say? You're going to the jail to preach  
To all the felons there, according to Laurent.

TARTUFFE

Oh no, you must have heard it wrong. He meant,  
Of course, tomorrow for the visit to the jail.  
Right now I'm going to a neighbor's home  
To talk about our Lord's return.  
Will you join us?

CLEANTE

I don't think so.

TARTUFFE

Then excuse me, sir.

*(TARTUFFE exits to exterior. CLEANTE exits opposite. LIGHTS OUT momentarily.)*

## **ACT IV; Scene Five**

*(LIGHTS UP: ORGON and DORINE ENTER, from the Interior, chatting, with MARIANE and ELMIRE.)*

ORGON

What a lecture! And a wonderful audience!  
Tartuffe impressed them all,  
From the smart ones to the very dense!  
*(Looking about)* Mother? Where...?

ELMIRE

She stayed behind, She wanted more information,  
And asked him for a private consultation.

DORINE

Oh, piffle!  
What sense does that nonsense make,  
When all is said and done? I would sooner guess  
The date of Christ's return to earth  
Than ask Tartuffe, for what it's worth!

ORGON

Another skeptic heard from! Dorine,  
You're surely not as empty-headed as you seem,  
So I suggest you shut your face for once.  
Instead, you come off sounding like a dunce.

DORINE

If you weren't my master I'd resent that,  
But clearly you know how to trim the fat  
From a theological presentation,  
And take an honest skeptic to the mat!

ELMIRE

But there's something to what Dorine has said.  
What's all this about the rapture?  
Just when I think I've heard the warning bell—  
A very clear difference between heaven and hell—  
Then he adds another chapter.

MARIANE

Who really cares? Maybe I have been mistook  
But it sounds like theological gobbledygook.  
Does the rapture come before or after tribulation,  
And is Apocalypse the same as Armageddon?

ORGON

You need to be listening and not pout,  
Or maybe take some copious notes.  
Tartuffe laid it all out—  
I've got some very special quotes.

MARIANE

Then what is Armageddon, father?

ORGON

It's the last Great War at the end of time.

DORINE

*(Aside)* But we need a better rhyme.  
*(Beat. She mimes playing trumpet.)*  
Gabriel plays the final trump  
And history hits a melancholy bump  
On that great highway to heaven above.  
That all I know except that...it's all about love.  
*(Winks at the audience)*

MARIANE

Is that right, Father?

DORINE

*(Singing)* It's all about love!

ORGON

Will you hush, Dorine! *(To MARIANE)* But don't you bother  
About that. I have an issue to pursue with you.

MARIANE

Don't start, father! I've told you this before—  
Why don't you listen? I will not marry someone I abhor!

ORGON

Now *you* listen, and listen well—

MARIANE

You cannot make me do it in this day and age!  
No longer can a marriage be arranged.  
None of my friends' fathers coerce their daughters or sons  
To marry someone if their heart's not won;  
You are my father and a Christian man,  
You cannot force me, by your harsh command  
To marry someone I despise.

ORGON

I take it you care nothing for my will,  
Although I'm writing you out of it. Still—

MARIANE

Now don't remind me of your service in the war.  
A private must obey whatever an officer may say;  
But I'm your daughter, not a doughboy's son;  
And St. Louis is quite a distance from Verdun.

ORGON

There was a time when sons and daughters cared;  
Their deepest thoughts and prayers were shared,  
And when parental wisdom was considered truth,  
From New York City to Duluth.

MARIANE

Please listen, father. I still love you dearly  
But no self-respecting girl today will merely  
Nod demurely while a parent makes her a match  
With someone she thinks is a lousy catch.

MARIANE, *Continued*

Before I'd hitch my wagon to your pompous pope  
Valere and I will likely just elope!

ORGON

What's that, elope? I'll tie you to your bed—

MARIANE

Oh, Father!

ORGON

I'll lock your bedroom door instead—

DORINE

Master, may I interject—

ORGON

You certainly may not—

CLEANTE

If I may counsel and advise—

ORGON

No, I've heard from you a lot—

DORINE

Is this a proper match, and will it last?  
You have an older man who loves to pray and fast;  
You'd wed him to a flapper with a shady past?

ORGON

What's that?

DORINE

She likes to dance and sing, play cards, and swear a bit—

ORGON

She does?

DORINE

Not that you'd notice; indeed, she's quite discreet;  
Mariane's not one for flirting on the street.

ORGON

Flirting?

DORINE

Perhaps I overstate the case. But your man is devout  
And prizes holiness so much he isn't likely to accept  
A lassie with a classy chassis who's so very hard to touch—  
I mean spiritually—much less go to bed with such.  
He thinks about Jesus, lost sheep and lambs,  
And has no interest in a lady's gams.  
(*Aside*) At least not *this* one.

ORGON

(*To the OTHERS*) What was all that? Is she talking about—

DORINE

Oh, Mariane's filled with imbecilic thoughts  
On Sunday games, flying machines, and women's rights;  
And the way they dress—today the skirts are shorter—  
Tomorrow maybe purple tights!

(*MARIANE makes a face at DORINE.*)

ORGON

(*Musing*) Tartuffe would not approve of that!

CLEANTE

This match, sir is a *gamble*—(*Mimes rolling dice*) seven come eleven—  
It's not a marriage to be made in heaven!

ORGON

(*Musing*) Perhaps you're right, Cleante. I'll ask the holy one.

CLEANTE

It's truly problematic, when all is said and done.

ELMIRE

Oh yes, the holy one, you say.  
I think I know how to puncture that soufflé.

ORGON

What's all this, Elmire?  
I cannot understand you, dear.

ELMIRE

About Tartuffe. Your obvious infatuation  
Has pushed your household to frustration.  
You disbelieve what's happened here today  
And discount all your son has had to say.

ORGON

I know you're partial to my rascal son  
And you didn't want to chide him for the fun  
He had in taunting this poor man;  
It was a very nasty trick indeed.  
Besides, you were too calm to be believed.

ELMIRE

And must our honor always rush to arms  
When the mere mention of illicit love provokes alarms?  
Must we rush to its attack borne  
With blazing eyes and lips of scorn?  
For my part, I just laugh away such nonsense;  
It's worth no more than twenty cents.  
Nor can I quite approve those savage prudes  
Whose honor arms itself with teeth and claws  
To tear men's eyes out at the slightest flaws.  
Heaven save me from that sort of honor—  
For I'd rather take the pass at Donner.  
A quiet cold rebuff, according to Jehovah,  
Will work as well to put off Casanova.

ORGON

What are you chattering about?

ELMIRE

Your ignorance is stout. But I wonder what you'd say,  
Should you be brave enough to play the sleuth,  
And let me show you that we've told the truth!

ORGON

Show me? About Tartuffe?

ELMIRE

Oh yes.

ORGON

Balderdash! Rubbish, I say!

ELMIRE

Suppose that I should find a way  
To make you see it clear as day?

ORGON

I don't believe you can.

ELMIRE

What a man! But answer me.  
I'm not proposing now that you believe us,  
Or convince you that your holy man's deceived us.  
But suppose you find a hiding place  
And hear it plainly—almost face to face?

ORGON

Well, I'd say—nothing. Because it just can't be.

ELMIRE

Oh no? You've branded me a liar,  
But your risk in disbelieving us is dire.  
I must at once, for my own satisfaction,  
Make you a witness to your man's carnal action.  
Just wait and see.

ORGON

All right, then. Let it be—what it will be!

ELMIRE

Good. I think I heard the front door slam.  
I guess he's back from Sadie and Sam's.  
(*To DORINE*) Send him to me.

DORINE

(*To ELMIRE*) Now wait, madam. The man's a crafty codger.  
It may be very difficult to trap our lodger.

ELMIRE

Oh no! A lover's never hard to cheat,  
And self-conceit leads straight to self-deceit.  
Bid him join me here.

DORINE

I will. (*Exits*)

ELMIRE

(*To CLEANTE and MARIANE*) We'll trap this devilish buccaneer!  
You two withdraw. (*THEY exit.*)

## ACT IV; Scene Six

ELMIRE

(*Indicating the table with the fruit bowl; ELMIRE adjusts the tablecloth.. (To ORGON)*)  
This table is your covert cell.

ORGON

What?

ELMIRE

It's important that we hide you well.

ORGON

Why under there?

ELMIRE

Do as I say: focus, it's not child's play.  
Get under now, I tell you, let the rest ensue.  
Be careful no one either sees or hears you.

ORGON

This scheme of yours—I find it hard to humor you,  
But I'll be patient as a dove and try to see it through.

(*ORGON pulls the tablecloth aside, and looks underneath.*)

ELMIRE

With enticing words I'll do the task  
And cause this hypocrite to drop his mask,  
Stroke the embers of his raging passion,  
And let him behave in a shameless fashion.  
When you're convinced, then I will end this ruse,  
And things shall go no further than you choose.  
So, when you think that it's gone far enough,  
Then you must stop his mad pursuit and call his bluff  
To spare your wife, and not expose me any more  
To his advances. (*looking inside*) But hide! He's coming toward the door!

*(ORGON scrambles under the table; ELMIRE makes sure he's hidden by the tablecloth then quickly straightens up to greet TARTUFFE.)*

## ACT IV; Scene Seven

TARTUFFE

*(Entering)* They told me that you wished to see me here.

ELMIRE

Yes, I have some secrets only for your ear.  
But shut the door, it's spies I fear.  
We surely can't afford another scene, one more  
Like that we had before!

*(TARTUFFE gazes at her quizzically. HE looks about, suspiciously.)*

TARTUFFE

Your words are somewhat hard to understand;  
Before you were more diffident—offhand.

ELMIRE

If my prudence has offended you, in part,  
How little do you know a woman's heart!  
Always, at first, our modesty resists  
The feelings that men spur when they persist.  
We may not fully own our love even when we could,  
And strive as though we would not, when we would.  
But although we may seem to be pretenders,  
We let a lover know our heart surrenders.  
Should I have tried to keep Damis from speaking,  
Said to the lad, “shut up, let be!”?  
Should I have heard the murmur of your dear heart bleeding  
So quietly, and suffered all your pleading in silence?  
Perhaps not. But when I tried my utmost to persuade you  
Not to accept the marriage that was mentioned—  
Certainly that was well-intentioned.  
Consider my chagrin, should such a match require  
That I must *share* a love which I *alone* may well desire!

TARTUFFE

Be still my heart! I'm deeply satisfied  
To hear such words from one whom I've beatified.  
Their honeyed sweetness pours through all my senses,  
And almost overcomes my weak defenses;  
(*Beat*) But there is something here  
That can't resolve my doubts, I fear.  
I find your words appealing, yet  
I cannot trust their pleasant flavor  
Until the granting of some little favor  
Should stir my passion fully with its fire.

(*ELMIRE coughs to attract her husband's attention.*)

ELMIRE

What! Must you push so fast, and without rest?  
Exhaust the entire love within a woman's breast?  
She dares to waive her usual discretion  
To offer you this bold confession and yet,  
Your passion boils, and you demand the victor's spoils?

TARTUFFE

Elmire, I count on nothing, even zeal,  
Until you've satisfied my love with something *real*.

ELMIRE

Ah! How your love enacts the tyrant's role  
And throws my heart into a mixing bowl;  
What! Is there no escape from your bold chase?  
No respite even? Not a breathing space?  
Is it right to be so exacting? For my part,  
It seems that you exploit the weakness  
You discover in a woman's heart.

TARTUFFE

But if my worship wins your gracious favor,  
Then why deny that proof in your behavior?

ELMIRE

But how can I consent to what you want  
Without offending heaven's law, or seeming nonchalant?

TARTUFFE

It's true that God forbids some carnal pleasure,  
But he approves of many earthly treasures.  
And God is love, the scriptures tell us,  
So he must bless our love as--zealous.  
Madam, I know the precepts of theology  
And offer them without apology;  
I'll duly teach you all these secrets, madam,  
As if I were a modern Adam. And...

*(ELMIRE COUGHS, louder, to get ORGON's attention, but HE remains hidden.)*

TARTUFFE, *Continuing*

Your cough is very bad.

ELMIRE

My throat is sore. It's rather—ironic.

TARTUFFE

*(Finding his flask)* Would you accept—a little tonic?

ELMIRE

I thank you, but—my throat is getting hoarse  
And all the tonic in the world will only make it worse.

*(TARTUFFE quickly takes a swig and pockets the flask.)*

TARTUFFE

Um-Hmm. *(Beat)* Your scruples, my dear, can be removed,  
And there's no harm unless a thing is proved.  
The public scandal is what stirs a squall,  
And secret sinning isn't really sin at all.

*(ELMIRE coughs again and taps the table in hopes of gaining ORGON'S attention.)*

ELMIRE

So then, I see I must agree to yield;  
My inner nature tells me not to go so far,  
But in this matter you've become the czar.  
Since more convincing proof's required.  
And as more evidence of ardor's still desired,  
I must relent—although if it should take me where  
I should not go, I may repent, and so...

TARTUFFE

It will not come to that! No, no!

ELMIRE

*(Beat)* Open the door, I pray you, go within,  
See if my husband's there and listening in.

TARTUFFE

Why care about just where he comes and goes?  
He is a man to lead round by the nose!  
He wants us to be widely seen together;  
He's such a fool that if he saw us in the altogether—

ELMIRE

That's rather raw—

TARTUFFE

He would deny he saw what he just saw.

ELMIRE

No matter. Now, just look around.  
Be very quiet though—you must not make a sound.

*(TARTUFFE exits, to interior)*

## **ACT IV; Scene Eight**

*(ORGON jumps out from under the table, bumping his head.)*

ORGON

Ouch! All this is quite—unconscionable!  
That man is absolutely—abominable!

ELMIRE

*(Taunting him)*  
What? You're out so soon? You cannot mean it!  
Get under the table, it's not time yet!  
Wait until the end to see, and to be quite sure  
That your handsome saint is not so pure.

ORGON

Nothing more wicked ever came out of hell!

ELMIRE

*(Playing him for the fool)* Oh well. Dear me. Let's not jump to conclusions,  
You may be subject to delusions.  
Let yourself be thoroughly awakened,  
Don't yield too soon, for you may be mistaken.  
*(Startled by a sound)* But he's coming—hide behind me!

## ACT IV; Scene Nine

*(As TARTUFFE enters, SHE makes her husband crouch behind her.)*

TARTUFFE

*(Not seeing ORGON)* Madam, I've searched the whole house through,  
And now I'm back to you. Indeed, I've made several tours—

ORGON

*(Surprising TARTUFFE; shoving him about)*  
What ho! Amours? What next, you cad?  
Abandoning what's right and holy, and whatever's true?  
What? Marry my daughter, and take my wife too?  
Now your lechery's been carried far enough—  
I can be tough, Tartuffe, I can be very, very rough!  
*(ORGON turns to ELMIRE who gestures apologetically.)*

ELMIRE

*(To ORGON)* 'Twas not in character for me to play  
This role; it seemed to be the only way.

ORGON

*(To ELMIRE)* I understand, at last.

TARTUFFE

*(To ORGON)* What? You believe—

ORGON

You hypocrite! You cannot justify this lewd behavior!  
Get out of here without a fuss—do me that favor!

*(HE shoves TARTUFFE again.)*

TARTUFFE

But my intent—

ORGON

Intent? That kind of talk is out of season.  
You leave this house at once, and for good reason!

TARTUFFE

*(Pushes back)* You play the master here, but you're the one to go!  
This house belongs to me, as you well know.,  
And I possess the power to confound your lies  
And force your household to believe—  
There's no one here who's going to make me leave!

*(TARTUFFE turns on his heel and stalks out.)*

## ACT IV; Scene Ten

ELMIRE

What sort of talk is this? What can it mean?  
The man's as crazy as the Mad Hatter!

ORGON

Good Lord, I'm done, Elmire. This is no laughing matter!

ELMIRE

What?

ORGON

Elmire, I've made a serious mistake.  
The deed of gift is what's at stake!

ELMIRE

The deed of gift?

ORGON

It is beyond recall. The deed of gift is done.  
I was naïve, and now Tartuffe has won.  
I've given him my whole estate.

ELMIRE

But, now...?

ORGON

I'm afraid it's too late.

ELMIRE

*(Making a gesture to her head and his)* Is anybody home? You imbecile!

*(Turning on her heel, she starts off)* Idiot! Dunce!

And to think I thought I sort of loved you—*once!* *(SHE strides off)*

*(ORGON sits heavily; clasps his hands to his head. LIGHTS OUT.)*

## ACT V; Scene One

*(LIGHTS UP as CLEANTE enters and approaches ORGON. DAMIS follows but hides himself.)*

CLEANTE

I say! *(Reassuring ORGON)* We'll see what can be done to meet this case.  
Otherwise you'll soon be living in disgrace.

ORGON

I know. Can a man who seemed so full of grace,  
Betray a friend? Well, no more pious folk for me,  
Henceforth I shall hate and despise them—utterly!

CLEANTE

What! Just because a master conned you so adroitly  
With a splendid show of false austerity,  
Must you believe that everyone's like him,  
Hypocrites, and full of evil to the brim?  
Beware! Don't rush or run to the extreme  
But measure everything by the golden mean.  
But honor those who honor God with kindly deeds,  
And not by singing hymns or spouting empty creeds.

*(DAMIS appears, surprising them)*

Father, I'm still here, as you can see.  
Am I still unwelcome?

ORGON

Damis, I feel no pain or anger just elation—  
The thing I want from you is--reconciliation.  
If I must choose between you and that self-righteous bum,  
There is no choice to make, my loving and most loyal son.

DAMIS

(As *THEY hug each other*) So sorry. I'm the world's biggest goof!  
As for Tartuffe...

ORGON

Damis, I have no way to oust him.

DAMIS

Just let me loose. I'll roust him!  
I'll skin him and I'll toast him—  
I'll flog him to an inch of his unholy life—  
And then I'll really roast him!

CLEANTE

Spoken like a raving youth. Just calm yourself, Damis;  
Control your towering tantrums, if you please.  
We live in such an age, with rules and courts and laws  
That violence cannot possibly advance our cause.

## **ACT V; Scene Two**

(*MADAME PERNELLE enters with ELMIRE, CLEANTE, MARIANE, and DORINE.*)

MADAME PERNELLE

What's going on? I hear all sorts of things.

ORGON

Strange things indeed! I received a wretched beggar  
And give him lodging, as if he were in fact my brother.  
I gave him food and clothing every day,  
Offered my daughter, gave my dignity away,  
And he meanwhile, the villain, wretch, low-life,  
Tried with darkest treason to seduce my wife.  
Furthermore, he's out to steal my house and home  
And cast us out, from what I used to own!

DORINE

(*Aside, sardonically*) Poor fellow!

MADAME PERNELLE

My son, I cannot possibly believe  
That he can do such devilish deeds!

ORGON

*(Startled)* What?

MADAME PERNELLE

Worthy men are still made sport of by their lesser peers  
Whose virtues are so often in arrears.

ORGON

*(Perplexed)* What, Mother? Please hold your tongue!

MADAME PERNELLE

I always told you, son, when you were young,  
That virtue here below is hated ever;  
The envious may die, but envy never.

ORGON

*(Furious)* You'd make me damn my soul! I tell you  
That I saw it all! Seduction was his goal!

MADAME PERNELLE

Surely not Tartuffe!

ORGON

Oh bosh. I'd swear it on the Bible or my life  
I saw and heard the scoundrel try to take my wife!  
With my own eyes—that's spelled e-y-e-s!  
Is he a man that you and God can bless?

MADAME PERNELLE

My dear, appearances are oft deceiving,  
And seeing shouldn't always be believing.

ORGON

You'll drive me mad! This man is nothing but a cad!

MADAME PERNELLE

You must, when you accuse someone, have evidence,  
In order to collect some recompense;  
But here we have a man whose sole ambition  
Is to save mankind from its perdition;  
In short—

ORGON

If you were not my mother—  
I swear I'd have you caged!  
How can you say all this? I'm so enraged!

DORINE

*(To ORGON)* You've brought your own fate, to be so doubted;  
You've flouted *our* report, now *yours* is flouted.

CLEANTE

*(All groan aloud)* It's useless, brother.  
Those we convince against their will  
Are of the same opinion still.

MADAME PERNELLE

How you treat me, sir—a woman of such good repute!

CLEANTE

With due respect, we're wasting time with this dispute  
Which we should better use in making plans  
To thwart this ugly traitor's scams.

*(Confused, MADAME PERNELLE sinks into a chair.)*

DAMIS

You really think he'll carry out his threats?

CLEANTE

Given what he's done so far I wouldn't hedge my bets.

ELMIRE

I can't believe it likely, given him;  
His venality's so obvious that  
Any thinking person would condemn his sin.

CLEANTE

I wish with all my heart that he'd release  
This gift of deed, and then the two of you make peace;  
I'd write a happy ending if I could;  
Better than anything made in Hollywood.

ELMIRE

*(Aping Greta Garbo, ELMIRE sidles up to ORGON)*  
If it would help us, husband dear,  
I'd become a movie star—that's a lucrative career.

ORGON

*(Touching her tenderly)* Don't be silly now, my dear, sweet Elmire;  
We're in big trouble should an officer appear  
To execute Tartuffe's authority.

*(The uniformed Mr. LOYAL is approaching the porch.)*

ORGON, *Continuing*

Now who's that man out there?

CLEANTE

Where? *(Spots LOYAL)* He's coming here.

ORGON

*(To DORINE)* Find out what he wants and—who is it?  
I'm in a fine state to receive a visit!

*(DORINE approaches LOYAL, warily. SHE looks him over. HE doffs his hat and smiles at her.)*

## ACT V; Scene Three

MR. LOYAL

*(To DORINE)* Hello, young lady—what a lovely blouse!  
I'd like to see the master of the house.

DORINE

Just now he's not so pleasant.

*(LOYAL yanks a handkerchief from his pocket and sneezes loudly.)*

DORINE, *Continuing*

You have a cold; that's quite a lusty sneeze  
This is a germ-free house. Come back tomorrow, please.

MR. LOYAL

It's nothing. Forgive me, but I must— *(Sneezes)* —drat!  
He'll want to see me *now*, you can count on that.

DORINE

Your name, then?

MR. LOYAL

Tell him simply his best friend has sent me  
In his best interest—or so his friend insists.

*(DORINE leaves him and goes to ORGON.)*

DORINE

This man comes wheezing and sneezing,  
On behalf of Tartuffe; I do not find his manner pleasing,  
But he says that you'll be glad he came.

ORGON

Perhaps he's come to reconcile us...

CLEANTE

Or just to beguile us...

ORGON

*(Hopefully)* Could it be Tartuffe is not so callous  
After all, and feels remorse for all his malice?  
Perhaps he will apologize for all his lies,  
And sent this man to happily restore our ties.

DORINE

*(Aside; sarcastically)* Oh sure! He's won the Nobel Prize for compromise!

ORGON

*(Scowls; To DORINE)* Move aside! *(To LOYAL)* Do I know you, sir?

*(MR. LOYAL sneezes hard, and ORGON backs off)*

ORGON, *Continuing*

You must have quite a cold.

MR. LOYAL

It comes from getting old. My name is Loyal, sir.  
I'm in the county sheriff's office,  
Which I hope you won't take amiss.  
I serve papers, documents, and such,  
And often have to work so hard I work too much.  
That may be why I'm prone to getting sickly;  
I'm thinking of retiring soon—or rather quickly.

*(LOYAL sneezes again, making everyone jump at the sound.)*

MR. LOYAL, *Continuing*

I beg you, sir, don't have a fit  
But I must serve you with a legal writ.

ORGON

What's that? A writ?

MR. LOYAL

A minor matter.

ORGON

Just how minor is it?

MR. LOYAL

Oh very minor, sir. It's a court order  
Requested by your former boarder—

ORGON

Tartuffe?

MR. LOYAL

To vacate this house without delay—

ORGON

What? We must leave? I don't believe—

MR LOYAL

Neither you nor your family may stay  
Another day. (*Sneezes*) Tartuffe owns everything here,  
And most of it is destined for the auctioneer.

ORGON

Astounding! That scoundrel!

MR. LOYAL

Forgive me, but this matter's not complex.  
Just pack your clothes and personal effects.  
But leaving that aside, the rest belongs  
To your dear friend and spiritual guide—

ORGON

What friend!

DORINE

Some guide!

MR. LOYAL

*(Waving his writ)* Good sir, don't hit the roof, but  
This contract here attached is quite sufficient proof.

DORINE

Your insolence, sir, is quite astounding too!

MR. LOYAL

What ho? I have no business that pertains to you.  
*(Pointing to ORGON)* This man's a gentleman.  
He's decent, fair, and courteous,  
And knows much better than to question justice.

DORINE

You come with no compassion—just a sneeze.  
You'd do better, sir, to trade it for a feeble wheeze!

MR. LOYAL

*(To ORGON)* Sir, please make your maid be silent or withdraw.  
I've come in good faith as a servant of the law.

ORGON

Settle down, Dorine.

MR. LOYAL

*(To ORGON)* I honor decent, honest folk like you, sir,  
And came to serve these papers to oblige you, sir.  
Others might have come in quite a different fashion;  
Hostile, and with more passion—indeed they might have come  
Behind the barrel of a gun.

ORGON

And how could one do worse that order folk  
To leave their house and home? Unless you misspoke—

MR. LOYAL

No, sir. But we'll give you ample time—  
After all, it's not a war crime—

DORINE

*(Aside)* Now *that's* a dandy rhyme!

MR. LOYAL

To put your affairs in order. I'd much prefer  
You leave now, but you have to get your things together.

MR. LOYAL, *Continued*

So, whatever the weather, you must be out of here  
By noon tomorrow—Or else! My men and I  
Will stay this night and, if you please,  
You'll not retire before giving us the keys.  
Come dawn, we'll help you move your stuff out  
Because I know it may be rough out.  
No one could act more generously, I believe,  
Short of granting you a real reprieve.  
I beg you'll do as well by me, and see  
I'm not distracted from my legal duty.

*(HE looks hard at DORINE, who sticks out her tongue at him.)*

DORINE

*(Brandishing a broom—or something)*  
Well, he's a stellar candidate for hell.  
To get you ready, sir,  
A little beating would become you well.

MR. LOYAL

If I charge you with assault you'll sing a different tune.  
Take care—busty women aren't immune.

CLEANTE

Beat it, Mr. Loyal, we've all had enough.  
It's clear you're only *loyal* to Tartuffe!

MR. LOYAL

Good-bye, then, and may God keep you from disaster. *(Sneezes loudly)*

ORGON

Get out, and take your bombast with you—faster!

*(ORGON pushes him toward an exterior exit.)*

MR. LOYAL

Then here, take this!

*(LOYAL puts the writ in ORGON'S hands and exits, quickly. LIGHTS FADE OUT. TRANSITIONAL MUSIC))*

## ACT V; Scene Four

*(LIGHTS UP LOW: It's almost dusk; the four gas lights on the porch stand out. MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLEANTE, DAMIS, ORGON are present; MARIANE and VALERE enter from the yard holding hands.)*

VALERE

*(To ORGON)* Sir, I hate to sing the blues  
But I've come here with unhappy news.  
A close friend at the sheriff's place  
Tells me they plan to double your disgrace!  
If you resist when they evict you,  
It seems they also will convict you  
Of trespass! And you are also subject to arrest  
If you try to hold your ground, or protest!  
Tartuffe will bait you, sir, so please don't give  
The officers a chance to be aggressive.

ORGON

*(Alarmed)* What shall I do then?

VALERE

The prudent course for you is flee for now!  
We'll file an appeal. The judge may disallow  
This man's treachery. You must stay out of sight,  
Because the officers are coming here tonight,  
With Tartuffe. You must go! *(VALERE tries to push him offstage.)*

ORGON

No, no, Valere, I shall not leave this place.  
I swear I'll stay and meet him face to face—  
Let the monster appear!

## ACT V; Scene Five

*(TARTUFFE enters.)*

ORGON, *Continuing*

So, Tartuffe!

TARTUFFE

*(Gloating)* Tartuffe indeed! They've brought you up to speed?

ORGON

*(Incensed; HE sputters)* You heinous blackguard! Abdominal—er—abominable—I—I command you to--

*(ORGON stumbles, fall to one knee, then staggers to his feet.)*

TARTUFFE

Evict yourself—it's far too late to make demands.  
Now don't pretend you're crippled or you're lame!

ORGON

You have betrayed us all! Have you no shame?  
By your treason you have laid me low,  
And all my pent-up rage is in this blow—

*(ORGON raises his fist, but CLEANTE and VALERE prevent him from landing the blow.)*

TARTUFFE

*(Sanctimoniously)* You can't provoke me, it's no use,  
And those who serve the Lord expect abuse.

CLEANTE

You are so patient, sweet, and blameless...

DORINE

And yet he takes God's name in vain—it's shameless!

TARTUFFE

*(To ORGON)* Your taunts and tantrums, sir, are all for naught;  
To do my duty is my one and only thought.

ORGON

I rescued you when you were destitute,  
Have you forgotten that, ungrateful brute?

TARTUFFE

*You* who begged me to take this place,  
And I intend to use it to extend God's grace  
To the unemployed, and other poor  
In wretched states, as I was once before;  
I'd hire those who've never seen a gallery  
And give them honest work and a good salary.  
We'll work those vineyards and make a living off it—  
Prohibition's almost done—we'll make a profit.

ORGON

But I thought that your plan was to dispense  
With vineyards, cellars—using better sense  
Than what I'd planned to do here with my axe!  
You mean to keep it running? Are these the facts?  
You'll keep producing alcoholic drinks  
Despite the law...

ELMIRE

That's what *he* thinks!  
We'll tell the Sheriff soon enough!

MADAME PERNELLE

I'm quite confused! Tell me, what does this mean?

ORGON

This con man's picked our family clean!

MADAME PERNELLE

But what of Christ's return? The tribulation?

TARTUFFE

This is your tribulation!

ORGON

You planned this when you first laid eyes on me...  
To worm your way into my family,  
And convince me to deed you my property—  
I once was blind, but now at last—I see!

*(SHERIFF appears and gestures to get DAMIS' attention. DAMIS goes to him without the others noticing as they cluster with TARTUFFE, heatedly talking sotto voce. SHERIFF disappears and DAMIS goes to his drum set as the on-stage conversation continues.)*

## ACT V; Scene Six

TARTUFFE

You all mistake my good intentions,  
And so I'll leave you to your own inventions.

CLEANTE

You hypocrite! What a master of pretense;  
He cloaks himself in all we truly reverence.

ELMIRE

Oh yes. He speaks so eloquently of the tribulation  
But I have seen his sodden libations...

TARTUFFE

You're not so pure yourself, Madam.

ELMIRE

Oh damn, I did forget! You were imbibing wine  
Left over from communion. That makes it fine.  
It's jake. The fake secured it from some priests...

DORINE

*(Aside)* Another revelation—at the very least!

## ACT V; Scene Seven

*(PERCUSSION EFFECT: DAMIS PLAYS SOFT DRUM ROLL as the SHERIFF and MR. LOYAL enter from interior.)*

SHERIFF

*(Expansively)* Good evening! Pardon us for barging in—well,  
I guess we're barging out. We rang the bell and knocked  
But found no one about.

ORGON

Never mind, good sheriff, sir. I'm glad you came.  
I want you to arrest this scoundrel, in God's name!

TARTUFFE

Balderdash! Don't listen to a word from this old fart—  
You have your orders, Loyal. Do your part!

MR. LOYAL

Indeed. The eviction notice. *(Sneezes)* I have it here—

SHERIFF

*(Interrupting)* However—things aren't always just as they appear.

*(PERCUSSION EFFECT: DAMIS PLAYS SNARE DRUMS as SHERIFF takes LOYAL aside, and whispers to him. OTHERS attempt to crowd in; SHERIFF waves them off and continues whispering. DAMIS STOPS, as LOYAL puts away the notice.)*

SHERIFF

*(To TARTUFFE)* Let's have it, sir.

TARTUFFE

What's that, Sheriff? You're an odd sort, I must say.

SHERIFF

The bulge in your pocket gives it away.

*(SHERIFF takes the flask from TARTUFFE'S pocket. OTHERS ad-lib "AH-Ha's.")*

SHERIFF, *Continuing*

We heard you had connections. Al Capone, perhaps,  
Or The Green Gang in St. Loo?

TARTUFFE

Communion wine—

SHERIFF

That won't do. *(Smells the flask)* Better confess your sin  
To the nearest priest. This flask contains no wine—but gin!

*(Hands the flask to LOYAL who turns away and covertly takes a swig then pockets it.)*

SHERIFF, *Continuing*

*(Referring to LOYAL)* That'll cure his cold!

TARTUFFE

Horse-feathers! You're just wasting time here, Sheriff.  
Please serve that writ, and get them out!

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

*Continue to next page for Authors' Production Notes*

## AUTHORS' PRODUCTION NOTES

by Gordon C. Bennett and Dana A. Priest

Moliere's verse play *Tartuffe* (subtitled “The Imposter,” or “The Hypocrite”) was first performed before King Louis XIV at Versailles, May 12, 1664. It was Moliere's most controversial satire because the French clergy perceived it to be an attack on religion, whereas Moliere meant it to be an attack on false piety or religious pretense.

The play has been translated into English by several scholars, both in prose and verse, and has become very popular in the English-speaking world as well as the French. The authors have created their own verse text, based in part on a prose text in common domain, and have set the story in St. Louis during the Roaring Twenties. The verse has meter and rhyme but is not enslaved to either; indeed, the jazz context offers more license for departure from the strict meter of Moliere and many of his translators. Again, the best advice for actors is to not read lines metrically but conversationally—and let the rhymes fall where they may.

Moliere's original characters may be found here, but with additional interests pursuant to St. Louis in the Twenties. Several persona have been added, notably toward the end of the play. The result is a more rational ending than Moliere created with his *deus ex machina* conclusion, which was essentially designed to flatter the king, Moliere's patron. Also, our ending becomes frantically hilarious as the tables are turned on Tartuffe.

**STAGING.** This play requires a single set; ideally mounted on a thrust stage, it could also work within a proscenium setting. The action occurs outdoors, on the spacious porch or patio of Orgon's home, with a screen door and an opaque {wooden?} door behind it, Up Center, serving as the back entrance to and from the house itself. That doorway may be left open, as for Mme. Pernelle's “grand exit” in the beginning, or the opaque door may be left ajar, as when a character is “hiding” there and occasionally peeking out, unobserved by those onstage. The outdoor porch or stage poper is elevated above the audience by two or three sets of steps. Easy access to that lower level is required, on both sides of the stage and perhaps the front, depending on the location of the aisles, which become a significant part of the action.

**PERCUSSION.** We suggest using **DAMIS** as both actor and occasional percussionist, and we have written some cues/suggestions into the script starting at ACT V, Scene Eight. He would have drums as well as “high-hat” cymbals, which he would use to punctuate key moments (such as the appearance of the Sheriff), punch lines, or the rhythm of the chase scene. If you elect this option, caution **DAMIS** against using percussion that is so loud it will distract the audience from the action or cover any of the lines.

If this experiment with percussion doesn't work for you, scrap it and let **DAMIS** be **DAMIS**—just the teenage boy with an interest in music (without the drum set on the set); or, let him just play the rhythm for the opening and closing jazz music in the play.

**PLAY BOOK.** We have kept Moliere's five-act format, with the so-called “French scenes,” meaning that the scene changes when a character enters or leaves the stage. Generally, the action is continuous, without a lighting change, although a few “dim-outs” or “dim-downs” are suggested at ACT changes or other key moments.

**There is an Intermission between ACTS III and IV.**

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT  
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT**

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

**FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER**

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. **It is a crime and it is wrong!**