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*Dramatic Publishing*

# THE MISER

by

MOLIERE

**A new acting version based upon the 1739 English translation  
by H. Baker and J. Miller, and arranged**

by

**WALTER F. KERR**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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(THE MISER)

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# The Miser

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

FOR EIGHT MEN AND SIX WOMEN\*

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The play was originally produced by the *Speech and Drama Department* of the *Catholic University of America*, Washington, D.C., May 26, 27, 28, 1940. The production was directed by *Walter F. Kerr*, assisted by *Dr. Josephine McGarry Callan*, with a setting designed and executed by *Ralph Brown*. The cast was as follows:

HARPAGON, <i>the miser</i> .....	Martin Murphy	
ELISE, <i>his daughter</i> .....	Mary Finnerty	
CLÉANTE, <i>his son</i> .....	Fred Horton	
VALÈRE, <i>in love with Elise</i> .....	Charles Grunwell	
FROSINE, <i>a matchmaker</i> .....	Louise Fox	
MARIANE, <i>in love with Cléante</i> .....	Helen Kerins	
MASTER JACQUES, <i>coachman and cook</i> .....	Edgar L. Kloten	
LA FLÈCHE, <i>Cléante's valet</i> .....	Gordon Gray	
MASTER SIMON, <i>Harpagon's agent</i> .....	Paul Tisdale	
MAGISTRATE .....	Thomas MacKenna	
MISTRESS CLAUDE {	} Kay Knockey	
BRINDAVOINE {, <i>servants</i> .....		} Mary Virginia Shea
LA MERLUCHE {		
MONSIEUR ANSELME, <i>Valère's father</i> .....	Alfred Loritsch	

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\*The cast can be reduced to 7 men and 6 women by having the parts of *Master Simon* and the *Magistrate* played by one person.

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PLACE: *Harpagon's house, Paris, France.*

TIME: 1668.

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE: *Harpagon's house, Paris. Morning.*

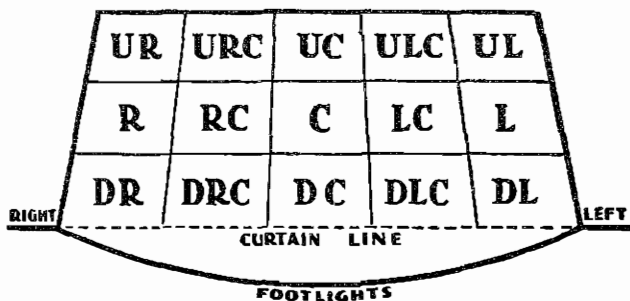
ACT TWO: *The same. Afternoon.*

ACT THREE: *The same. Evening.*

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The *Extra Servant*, at the end of Act One, may be doubled with the *Magistrate*. It would, however, be simpler to use a member of the stage crew for the *Extra Servant*. Production Notes for "The Miser" will be found at the end of the play.

## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

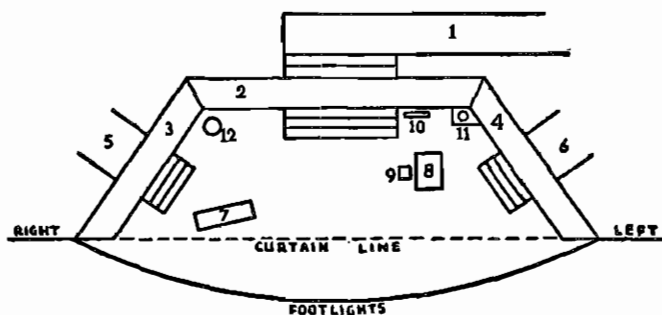


### STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

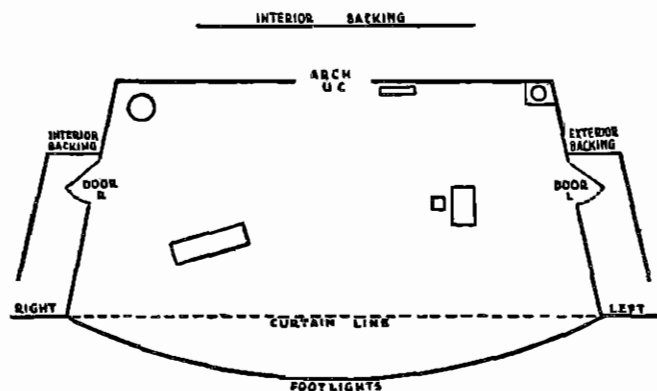
NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

## FLOOR PLAN OF ORIGINAL PRODUCTION



- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Backstage approach to U C entrance. | 6. Approach to L entrance.       |
| 2. Basic platform, upstage area.       | 7. Backless sofa or couch.       |
| 3. Basic platform, right stage.        | 8. Table.                        |
| 4. Basic platform, left stage.         | 9. Chair.                        |
| 5. Approach to R entrance.             | 10. Candelabrum stand.           |
|  | 11. Small table with large vase. |
|  | 12. Statue.                      |

## THE SAME SET WITHOUT PLATFORMS



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# Production Notes

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## CHARACTERIZATIONS

**HARPAGON:** He is completely avaricious, and sees all other things, including his children, only in this light. Fearful of others discovering the extent of his wealth, he attempts to conceal it, but the passion is so dominant that it escapes through his every word and action. He is a little over sixty, and as carping and crochety as his age combined with his selfishness would suggest. He is by no means a completely unsympathetic character, however, since he is such a victim of his own desires that we must pity him; and his passion for money is so grotesque that we must be amused, and become rather fond of him. Furthermore, he is constantly balked and frustrated in his plans, so that the effect is one more of a man bewildered and attacked on all sides than that of the successful and shrewdly dominating miser. He is pathetic in his incompetence to realize his intentions, and rather lovable in his perplexed frustration. His attempts at shrewdness are rather more comic than vicious, though he is capable of a broadly ironic manner. His ability to deceive himself is greater than his ability to deceive others, and that, too, is an amusing and almost endearing characteristic. His physical mannerisms are sharp and fidgety, though sometimes fumbling.

**ELISE:** Elise is in love with Valère, secretly. She is a wholesome, sane, attractive girl whose fear of her father does not keep her from a sincere, if adventurous, love affair. She is in her twenties, but a little older than Mariane, and clearly more mature. She gives the impression of being more intelligent than her brother, Cléante, but is devoted to him. Her manner is



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graceful and flowing, and rather serene except when in direct fear of her father; but even here, her attitude is more one of respect than cringing submission; her concessions to Harpagon are more out of conscience than cowardice.

CLÉANTE: He is affable and good-looking, but somewhat foppish. This last does not make him a fool, nor diminish the sincerity of his love for Mariane, but it does cause him to romanticize it excessively, and to dramatize himself. He has a certain native cunning, not entirely unlike his father's, but it is called into play only in desperation, and even then is likely to be a bit on the simple side. His manner is graceful, if a bit studied, and his love of clothes is genuine rather than for mere worldly effect. In all, he is ingratiating because of his sincerity, but not quite up to his sister's stability of mind and temperament.

VALÈRE: He is disguised as a servant in Harpagon's household, though a servant of high rank rather than a menial. That is, he is completely unlike Jacques and La Flèche, his actual gentility being more suited to the rather officious rôle of steward and general overseer. Actually, of course, he is of noble birth, which he never forgets. This gives him an occasional pompousness, especially with the lower servants, but one feels that this is necessary to his disguise rather than an inherent overbearing manner. He, perhaps, is secretly amused at these times. He is sincerely in love with Elise, but has only contempt for her father, despite his necessary flattery. His manner is quick and assured; he is handsome and graceful in the accepted manner of the period, so that, even as a steward, he still seems a cut above his rank. He is given to the use of a walking stick and the period handkerchief, quite in the manner of the gentry; though this is actually a carry-over from his true station in life, it might seem to the others as an affectation to emphasize his servant-importance, and hence be completely unsuspecting. He is facile, glib, and quick-witted.

**FROSINE:** She is a woman of the town who does Harpagon's love-making errands for him, arranging his own and his children's betrothals—a go-between and sort of matrimonial agent. She is sophisticated, attractive in a florid sort of way, poised, but in an arch manner, and dresses brilliantly but with a very slight vulgarity of taste. She is in it for what she can get out of it, but her technique is exquisite, her flattery of Harpagon more accustomed and subtle than that of Valère. When she assists the children rather than Harpagon, late in the play, it is not out of affection, but of sensing which way the wind blows. This is not unpleasant or grasping in her, however, since she is so frankly what she is, and her manner is so hearty and engaging. She is always likeable.

**MARIANE:** Mariane is engaged to Harpagon against her wishes, but she is actually in love with Cléante. She is quite young, very pretty, and rather fluttery and excitable in contrast to Elise's greater maturity. She is a timid sort, and appealing in her need of protection. She is graceful, but in a birdlike way; she is simple and without sophistication.

**JACQUES:** Jacques is the put-upon servant, always in trouble and bemoaning his state, and unable to do anything successfully. He is genuinely devoted to Harpagon, unhappy only in that he is not allowed full monetary leeway for his cookery. He is proud of his talents in this direction, too; hence, his jealousy of Valère's authority over him in such matters, which has no basis in reality. Aroused to vengeance on Valère, his manner is simple and direct rather than clever or shrewd, and comes from his heart rather than his head. He is simple-minded, earnest, and appealing in spite of his tearfulness. He is proud of his work, and efficient at it, though constantly deprived of its full development. He is more the stupid, ingratiating servant than La Flèche. His manner is slow and deliberate.

**LA FLÈCHE:** La Flèche is the clever, scheming, tricky servant. He is witty, capable of fencing with and besting Harpagon, and

not at all humble or unaware of his abilities. He is likable in his brashness and his ability to face up with Harpagon, which few of the others will do. His manner is quick, his feet nimble, and his intelligence high. La Flèche is impudent and jocular, but never offensive. He is playful, and not inclined to accept Harpagon's authority. He is also a little unscrupulous.

**SIMON:** He is the typical bluff business-man of the period, interested in his own transactions, and not particularly quick-witted. His manner is professional and competent.

**MAGISTRATE:** The Magistrate is ponderous, obvious in his thinking, and pompous in his authority. He knows all the legal forms, and delights in them rather than in actually doing his job. He is rather thick-headed, but imposing. His manner is official and rather stuffy, unctuous rather than unpleasant.

**CLAUDE, BRINDAVOINE, and LA MERLUCHE:** They are lower-caste servants, the menials of the household. They are stupid, frightened, gaping, and rather grotesque in appearance and manner. Emphasize their sloppiness and inefficiency in a comic way. The latter two were originally male rôles, but are here indicated to be played by women. This has occasioned almost no alteration of lines.

**ANSELME:** He is the distinguished, aristocratic type, in his late fifties. He is highly mannered, but not artificially so. Anselme has great dignity, and, later, affection, but he is rather quiet and sad in his earlier graciousness. He is also capable of firmness.

## COSTUME SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are based on the costumes used in the original production. Two costume changes were used for the principal characters, though they are not required. If a change is made, the second costume would make its appearance about halfway through the second act, in preparation for the

arrival of Mariane and the entertainment planned for her, individuals changing as opportunity permits. Simpler costumes and different color schemes may of course be used. The ideas given here are merely suggestions.

HARPAGON: (1) Black satin breeches with white ruffs at the knees, blue-grey brocade vest, grey velvet brocade coat with silver trim, black stockings and shoes, white stock, and grey wig. (2) He wears the same breeches, a black and white satin vest, and a black velvet coat embroidered in silver.

CLÉANTE: (1) White satin full pantaloons with wine-colored ruffs at the knees, brocaded vest, wine velvet coat with silver bows and trim, grey silk stockings, black shoes, lace handkerchief, and brown wig. (2) Grey satin breeches, old rose brocade coat with gold sequin trim, and old rose and gold vest.

VALÈRE: (1) Blue silk breeches with peach trim at the knees, peach brocade coat with gold buttons, tan silk stockings, tan shoes, light brown or blond wig, lace handkerchief, tan silk vest, and staff or stick. (2) Black satin breeches with gold ruffs at the knees, old rose brocade vest, blue velvet coat with gold braid trim and white satin ruffles at the cuffs.

ELISE: (1) Light blue silk dress with gold band trim, white starched collar, and lace cuffs. (2) Coral repp with wide gold lace trim and chartreuse bows, and a rhinestone necklace.

FROSINE: (1) Black lace dress with green silk trimming, large black velvet hat with green plumes, and a rose in her hand. (2) Purple silk dress trimmed with gold lace bands on the skirt and neckline, with green silk bows, gold necklace, and a cloak.

LA FLÈCHE: Grey flannel breeches, grey coat with blue trim, grey vest, white stockings, black shoes, tricornered hat, and a short black wig.

MARIANE: Yellow silk dress with gold braid trim, light cream-colored brocade underskirt, and a cloak.

JACQUES: Blue breeches, long blue vest with gold braid and

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buttons, blue and silver livery coat (oversize), tricornered hat, short blue smock and chef's hat (for Act Two coat-changing business), white stockings, black shoes, black and orange squared handkerchief, short brown wig, and bottom of shoes painted red.

SIMON: Grey satin breeches, light yellow brocade vest, dark blue velvet coat with gold braid, black stockings and shoes, and a tricornered hat.

ANSELME: Black satin breeches with red bows at the knees, rust-colored brocade vest, gold brocade coat with sequin trim down the front and on the pockets, tan stockings, black shoes, beaver hat with plumes, staff, and a grey wig.

MAGISTRATE: Black judicial robe and justice's cap, and a long white curled judicial wig. Actually, this is not an authentic costume, but it is much more effective.

BRINDAVOINE: Grey and white flannel servant costume with tight laced bodice, white cap, and apron. There is a large black stain on the front of her skirt.

LA MERLUCHE: Maroon and white servant costume, white blouse with black velvet bodice, white cap, and apron. There is a tear in the side of her skirt.

MISTRESS CLAUDE: Grey and blue servant costume, cap, and apron. She carries a large sweep-type of broom.

EXTRA SERVANT: Brown breeches, vest, coat with light tan trim, tricornered hat, and a short wig.

## MUSIC

The moving pictures have made excellent use of background music to enhance the emotional value of a scene. The following suggestions are offered for "The Miser." It should be remembered that music is to be used as *background*. As such, it should not be played too loudly, and drown out the speech of the actors. In most cases, just a short section of a piece need be played—enough to set the mood.

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- OVERTURE: "Dream of a Naughty Boy," by Ravel.
- VALÈRE-ELISE LOVE THEME: "Waltz (from 'Suite for Two Pianos')," by Arensky.
- HARPAGON THEME: "Till Eulenspiegel (Part II)," by Strauss.
- LA FLÈCHE THEME: "Overture to Zampa (Part II)," by Herold.
- CHASE SCENE AT END OF ACT ONE: "Till Eulenspiegel (Part II)," by Strauss.
- FROSINE THEME: "Overture to Zampa (Part II)," by Herold.
- MARIANE THEME: "Eine kleine Nachtmusik (3rd movement)," by Mozart.
- SERVANT THEME: "Polka and Gallop," by Strawinsky.
- CLÉANTE-MARIANE LOVE THEME: "Orpheus in Hades—Overture," by Offenbach.
- BEATING SCENE: "William Tell Overture (the Storm)," by Rossini.
- STEALING THEME: "The Sorcerer's Apprentice (Part I)," by Dukas.
- HARPAGON'S FINAL SCENE IN ACT TWO: "The Sorcerer's Apprentice (Part II)," by Dukas.
- MAGISTRATE THEME: "Polka and Gallop," by Strawinsky.
- END OF ACT THREE: "Nocturne No. 12," by Chopin.

## PROPERTY PLOT

### GENERAL PROPERTIES [*on stage and used in all acts*]:

Statue on pedestal U R. (See note at end of "Property Plot.")

Small backless sofa R C, with secret drawer to hide money.

(The money might be concealed under the cushions.)

Table L C, with small drawer, also for money.

Single chair, right of table L C.

Small stand with vase, U L.

Candelabrum, left of steps U C.

Carpeting.

Wall brackets with candles, on either side of the arch U C and on the wall below the doors R and L. For safety's sake, it is suggested that electric candles be used throughout the play. If lighted candles are used, extreme care should be taken.

## ACT ONE

### GENERAL PROPERTIES [*on stage and used in Act One*]:

Cashbox, concealed in statue.  
Coins in secret compartments in table and sofa.  
Coins in vase.  
Decanter, with wine, on table.  
Water in vase portion of statue.

### OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off U C*]:

VALÈRE: Handkerchief and staff.  
LA FLÈCHE: Two scrolls.  
JACQUES *and* EXTRA SERVANT: Bed, tapestries, musket, small furnace, lute, chessboard, and lizard.

### OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off R*]:

HARPAGON: Spectacles.

### OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off L*]:

ELISE: Dagger.  
CLÉANTE: Handkerchief and staff.

## ACT TWO

### GENERAL PROPERTIES [*on stage and used in Act Two*]:

Strike decanter and all extra hand properties except the tapestries, gun, and a few odds and ends of wrapping paper left on the floor for La Flèche to pick up.  
Add chair left of table L C.  
Several canes or sticks in the corners U L and U R.

Bowl of fruit on the table.  
Cashbox in statue.

OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off U C*]:

FROSINE: Rose.

HARPAGON: Diamond ring, spectacles.

OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off R*]:

JACQUES: Large handkerchief, chef's cap.

BRINDAVOINE: Plate of cakes.

LA MERLUCHE: Plate of cakes.

MISTRESS CLAUDE: Broom.

OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off L*]:

VALÈRE: Lace handkerchief, cane (prepared for breaking).

### ACT THREE

GENERAL PROPERTIES [*on stage and used in Act Three*]:

Strike chair left of table L C.

Light candles.

Inkwell, ink, quill pen, and paper, on table.

Candle snuffer U L.

OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off U C*]:

MAGISTRATE: Chalk and paper.

ANSELME: Staff.

LA FLÈCHE: Cashbox.

OFFSTAGE PROPERTIES [*off L*]:

VALÈRE: Ruby seal and bracelet.

NOTE: In the original production a special statue was built, depicting a Grecian woman carrying a vase on her head. A secret compartment was made in the stomach of the statue. Access to it was made by putting the stomach portion of the statue on a hinge, which opened and closed like a small door.



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If the statue business is not feasible, a portrait of Harpagon may be substituted, and hung on the wall U R. The face of the portrait should open to permit hiding the cashbox within. Other simpler suggestions for hiding places are a clock, or one of those large dolls, with long period dresses, that are used nowadays to conceal telephones.

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# ACT ONE

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**SCENE:** *A room in Harpagon's house. In the original production, a platform extended across the back and two sides of the set. (See cut on page 6.) The stage directions given in the play follow this stage plan, but the platforms are not necessary, and the same directions, with few exceptions, will work out just as well when the play is staged on one level. Steps lead to entrances at R and L stage. The door L leads to the garden, while the door R leads to other rooms in the house. A broad flight of steps leads to the platform U C. From here, two more steps lead up to another platform, and on out U C. There is a small backless sofa at R C. At L C is a small table, with a chair right of it. Just left of the first flight of steps U C is a large candelabrum. There is a small stand or table in the corner U L, on the floor level. On it is a large ornamental vase. On the floor level in the corner U R is a stand with a piece of statuary, representing a woman holding a vase on her head. In the Property Plot given at the end of this play will be found alternative suggestions, should this statue be difficult to obtain. Wall brackets, holding candles, are on either side of the entrance U C, and below the doors R and L.]*

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** *ELISE and VALÈRE are discovered in an embrace, framed in the archway U C. After a moment, ELISE breaks from him, a frightened look on her face. She turns away and sweeps across the platform to the garden door L and looks out. She turns toward VALÈRE again, and VALÈRE crosses to her swiftly. They embrace. Again she breaks*

*away, fearfully, and sweeps down the stairs and over to the sofa, where she sits, perturbed. VALÈRE follows her, speaking.*]

VALÈRE. What, my charming Elise! Do you grow melancholy after the kind assurances you gave me of your love? Tell me—do you regret having made me happy?

ELISE [*turning to him*]. No, Valère! I could not repent of anything I do for you. But, to tell the truth, our success gives me some disquiet, and I am much afraid of loving you a little more than I ought. [*She rises and crosses D R.*]

VALÈRE [*following her*]. Elise! What is there to fear in the kindness you show me?

ELISE. Alas! A thousand things at once. The rage of my father, the reproaches of my family, the censure of the world! But most of all, Valère—the change of your heart.

VALÈRE. Ah, you do me wrong! [*He kneels to her.*] Suspect me of anything, Elise, rather than a failure of my devotion to you.

ELISE [*bending to him, her hands to his face, tenderly*]. Ah, Valère—everyone talks in the same strain. All men are alike in their words. It is only their actions that show them to be different.

VALÈRE. Then at least wait to judge of my heart by mine. Allow me time to convince you, by a thousand proofs, of the sincerity of my affection.

ELISE [*crossing past him to D C*]. Alas! How easily are we persuaded by those we love! [*She faces him.*] Yes, Valère, I believe you really love me, and will be constant to me. I shall not doubt it. [*She goes to the sofa and sits on the left end of it, speaking sadly.*] I shall only be concerned with the blame which people may put on me.

VALÈRE [*rising, sitting on the right end of the sofa*]. But why this uneasiness?

ELISE. I should have nothing to fear, if all the world looked on you as I do. My heart pleads all your merits, supported by that gratitude with which Heaven has bound me to you. I call to mind at every moment that great danger which brought us together, which made you risk your own life to snatch mine from the fury of the waves . . .

[*Having made a graceful hand movement with this last phrase, ELISE turns to him. VALÈRE'S hands take her shoulders, and they embrace, extravagantly. They break, and ELISE looks away.*]

ELISE. . . . that tender concern which you showed me when you had dragged me out of the water . . .

[*VALÈRE'S hands come to her shoulders again. He turns her toward him, and they embrace again, just as extravagantly. Again, ELISE breaks and turns away.*]

ELISE. . . . that ardent love which makes you neglect family and country, and keeps you here in disguise . . .

[*The business of embracing is repeated, after which VALÈRE turns his face away, with elaborate modesty.*]

ELISE. . . . which makes you pretend to be a servant to my father.

[*ELISE rises quietly and crosses to C. At almost the same time, VALÈRE turns and automatically begins another embrace, only to find himself embracing empty air. He is embarrassed, and then recovers.*]

ELISE. All this moves me deeply, and is sufficient, in my eyes, to justify our engagement. But it is not enough, perhaps, to justify it to others—and I am not sure they will understand our love.

[ELISE crosses to upstage of the sofa, and stands above him. VALÈRE at once rises and graciously hands her to a seat in the center of the sofa.]

VALÈRE. Of all that you have mentioned, it is only by my love that I pretend any merit with you. [*He kisses her on the forehead.*] As to the scruples you have, your father himself takes but too much care to justify you to all the world. [*He strides to C, suddenly angry.*] His excessive avarice, and the austere way in which he treats you, would justify stranger things than our secret love. Pardon me, charming Elise, for speaking of him in this manner before you. [*He crosses to the table at L C, not facing her.*] You know that on this subject one can say nothing good. [*Facing her across the room, he continues decisively.*] But if I can find my father, mother, and sister again, we shall have no trouble to gain him on our side. I am impatiently expecting some news of them, and if it does not come soon, I myself will go in search of them.

ELISE [*rising, crossing to him quickly*]. Ah, Valère! Do not leave, I entreat you. Think only how to work yourself into my father's favor! [*She indicates the door R.*]

VALÈRE [*going to the door R, looking off and listening, and then turning back to her*]. You see how I go about it! And the artful deception I was forced to make use of to get into his service! Under what mask of sympathy—[*Both make mask-like "sympathetic" faces, front, mockingly.*]—and agreement of sentiments—[*Both make mocking faces of agreement, front.*]—I disguise myself to please him! I am succeeding admirably, and find that to be in the good graces of men, there's no better way than to abide by their maxims, to praise their follies, and applaud everything they do. [*He raises his head and faces front rather nobly.*] Sincerity suffers somewhat by the trade I follow. But since we have no other

way, it is not the fault of those who flatter, but of those who wish to be flattered.

ELISE [*taking his arm and bringing him directly D R, speaking secretively*]. But why don't you try to gain my brother's support, in case the servant, Mistress Claude, should take it into her head to betray our secret?

VALÈRE [*rapidly, confidentially*]. There is no managing them both at once. Their tempers are so opposed that it is difficult to be friendly with both at the same time. [*He seizes her hands.*] But you, on your part, take advantage of the love between you to bring him over to our interests. [*He stops breathlessly, crosses quickly to the door L, and looks out. Then he turns back to her.*] Here he comes. I'll step aside.

[*ELISE sweeps U C, onto the platform, and extends her arms to VALÈRE. He crosses on the platform to her, arms also outstretched. They hesitate a moment, elaborately, looking into each other's eyes, and then embrace. As they break, ELISE crosses to R C, disturbed.*]

ELISE. I don't know whether I shall have the power to lay myself thus open to him.

[*ELISE turns to VALÈRE and blows him a kiss. He catches it in his hand, whips out a lace handkerchief with his free hand, and extravagantly deposits the kiss on the handkerchief. Then, with a last look at her, he goes out U C. At the same time, CLÉANTE, ELISE'S brother, enters L, closing the door behind him.*]

CLÉANTE. I am very glad to find you alone, Sister. [*He comes to the foot of the steps and looks around cautiously.*] I am impatient to tell you a secret.

ELISE [*going to right of the table L C*]. Here I am, Brother—ready to listen. What is it you have to say to me?

CLÉANTE. A world of things, Sister, summed up in one word—  
I am in love. [*He sighs deeply.*]

ELISE [*startled, moving quickly to him*]. You—are in love?

CLÉANTE [*sighing again and subsiding onto the steps*]. Yes. In love! [*He jumps up.*] But, before I go any further, I know that I depend on a father, and that the name of son subjects me to his will—[*He advances on her, forcing her a step back toward c stage; this business is repeated with each additional phrase, which he counts off on his fingers markedly, emphasizing the "that" which introduces each reason he gives.*]—that we ought not to engage ourselves without the consent of those who gave us birth—that Heaven has made them the guardians of our vows—that we are enjoined not to dispose of ourselves, but by their direction—that the heat of youth very often draws us toward dangerous precipices—and that——

[*But CLÉANTE has run out of fingers to count on, and finds himself marking the empty air. ELISE quickly puts up her hand for him to continue counting on, but he brushes it aside impatiently. They have crossed on a slight upstage diagonal, so that ELISE is now just upstage of the sofa.*]

CLÉANTE. I say all this to you, Sister, to save you the trouble of saying it to me. [*He crosses U C and stands, arms folded, adamantly.*] For, frankly, my love will listen to nothing, and I beg you not to dissuade me.

ELISE [*going up to him*]. Have you engaged yourself, Brother, with her you love?

CLÉANTE [*crossing down to right of the table*]. No. [*He turns to her.*] But I have determined to do it. And I ask you once more to offer no objections.

ELISE. Am I, Brother, so heartless a person?

CLÉANTE. No, Sister—but you are not—[*He sits, sighing again, on the chair right of the table.*]—in love! [*He continues dreamily, running his fingers along the table.*] You are ignorant of that sweet violence which such tender passion wreaks upon our hearts. . . . [*His strolling fingers have stopped, at arm's length, on the table-top, leaving his arm suspended foolishly. He glances at it casually, looks away, then looks back again surprisedly, and quickly puts his hands in his lap. He composes himself, and speaks forcibly to ELISE.*] I am afraid of your wisdom.

ELISE [*crossing to him*]. Alas, Brother, not a word about my wisdom. There is no one who does not fail in it at least once—and if I lay open my heart to you, I shall perhaps appear much less discreet in your eyes than yourself.

CLÉANTE [*eagerly, taking her hands*]. Ah! If only your heart, like mine—

ELISE [*quickly, flustered*]. Let us finish your affair first. Tell me with whom you are in love!

CLÉANTE [*facing front, enraptured*]. A young creature—[*There is a long pause, and then he comes out of it.*]—who recently took lodgings in this neighborhood. Her name is Mariane. . . .

[*CLÉANTE is off again, into a long, ecstatic pause. ELISE has to shake him out of it this time; embarrassed, he recovers himself.*]

CLÉANTE. She lives with her mother, who is almost always ill—[*He sighs sadly, and then suddenly grins at ELISE, slyly.*]—and whom she cares for tenderly. She waits upon her, comforts her—[*He breaks forth suddenly.*] Ah, Sister, if you could but see her!

ELISE [*kneeling beside him*]. I see a great deal, dear Brother, in what you've told me.

CLÉANTE. I have found out that they are quite poor. Imagine,



Sister, what joy it would be to raise the fortunes of one you love! [*He rises and crosses D L, angrily.*] And then imagine how I feel when, through the avarice of a father, I am unable to taste that joy or show her any proof of my love!

ELISE [*rising, crossing to him*]. Yes, Brother. I understand what your concern must be.

CLÉANTE. Can anything be more cruel than this—[*He strides to R, gesturing toward the door.*—this close-fisted rule we are kept under—this strange miserliness in which we're made to starve? [*He paces about the room, furiously.*] What good will it do us to have means, if we don't get them till we're too old to enjoy them? Or if, meantime, I'm forced to run myself in debt with everybody around me—if we both have to borrow from tradesmen to clothe ourselves decently? [*He nearly bumps into the statue U R; he recoils, and then joins ELISE at C stage, desperately.*] Elise, I wanted to speak to you—to help me sound out Father on this matter. And, if he opposes me, I am determined to elope with this lovely girl and make the best of it!

[*ELISE clasps CLÉANTE'S hands in hers, frightened.*]

CLÉANTE. I'm borrowing money wherever I can, and if your affairs are like mine and Father opposes us both, we'll leave him—

[*ELISE recoils breathlessly, holding CLÉANTE'S hands at arm's length.*]

CLÉANTE.—and rid ourselves of this avaricious tyranny!

ELISE [*breaking from him, crossing D L, thoughtfully*]. It is very true that he gives us every day more and more reason to regret the death of our dear mother—

[*HARPAGON'S voice, shrill and angry, is heard off R, berating the servants. ELISE and CLÉANTE turns quickly, listening.*]

CLÉANTE. I hear his voice. [*He takes ELISE'S hand and leads her up the steps to the door L.*] Let us finish our talk in the garden.

[*They stop a moment to lean back, both in the same position, and listen for HARPAGON'S voice.*]

CLÉANTE. Afterwards, we'll join forces and attack him together!

[*ELISE and CLÉANTE slip out L. At the same time, HARPAGON'S voice becomes louder off R, and, in a moment, there is a sound of many scrambling footsteps. Suddenly, JACQUES, MISTRESS CLAUDE, BRINDAVOINE, and LA MERLUCHE burst into the room from R, madly tumbling over one another to escape HARPAGON'S wrath. There is a general melee, and then all escape U C, running, to be pulled off by MISTRESS CLAUDE. Last to run in is LA FLÈCHE, who leaps from the stairs and dashes across the stage, and dives behind the table at L C, hiding himself from HARPAGON, who now appears at R, still screaming.*]

HARPAGON. Get out of here this moment, and let me have no more prattle! March out of my house, you sworn rascal, you gallowsbird! [*He stops, breathless, at the head of the steps.*]

LA FLÈCHE [*crawling downstage, left of the table*]. Never have I seen anyone so villainous as this cursed old fellow. I think he's possessed!

[*Meantime, HARPAGON starts to tiptoe across the room and around the table. He discovers LA FLÈCHE and strikes him, across the table, on the head.*]

HARPAGON. Are you muttering at me?

LA FLÈCHE [*jumping up, leaping to the first step at L stage*]. Why are you driving me out?

HARPAGON. It well becomes you, scoundrel, to ask me reasons.

Indeed! [*He starts for him.*] Get out—quick—before I beat out your brains!

LA FLÈCHE [*scurrying away, below the table, to C.*]. What have I done to you?

HARPAGON. You've done this—you've made me resolve to get rid of you!

LA FLÈCHE [*folding his arms, standing rigid*]. My master, your son, has given me orders to wait for him.

HARPAGON. Go wait for him in the *street*, then!

[*HARPAGON barks the word "street" and advances a step. As he barks, LA FLÈCHE bounces into the air, still rigid, and comes down a little further R. This business is repeated with each italicized word, until LA FLÈCHE is directly in back of the sofa at R C.*]

HARPAGON. Not in my house, planted bold upright like a *stake*—nosing into everything that goes on! I won't have a *spy* everlastingly before my eyes—a *traitor* who ferrets about in every corner to see if there is anything to *steal*!

[*With this last word, HARPAGON is so close to LA FLÈCHE that the latter must leap over the sofa. He falls to the floor in front of it, and stretches himself out comfortably and insolently. HARPAGON is now directly behind the sofa.*]

LA FLÈCHE. How the deuce can anyone steal anything from you? Are you the man to be robbed—who keeps everything under lock and key, and stands guard day and night?

HARPAGON [*kneeling on the sofa from behind, leaning over toward LA FLÈCHE*]. I will lock up everything I think proper, and stand guard as I please! [*In leaning over and shaking his finger at LA FLÈCHE, he loses his balance and almost falls forward. He catches himself, rebounds angrily off the sofa, and runs slyly D C, speaking to the audience.*] I tremble for

fear he has suspected something about my money. [*He turns on LA FLÈCHE from D C.*] Don't you go about making up stories that I have money hidden in my house.

LA FLÈCHE [*leaping to his feet, eagerly*]. You have money hidden?

HARPAGON [*raging, running at him as though to grasp him*]. No! You rascal!

[*But LA FLÈCHE has slipped around the right end of the sofa just in time, and HARPAGON is left clutching empty air, D R.*]

HARPAGON [*to the audience*]. I shall go mad! [*He turns to LA FLÈCHE, who is strolling toward C, above the sofa.*] I only ask whether you wouldn't maliciously spread the report that I have.

LA FLÈCHE [*impudently*]. What difference does it make to us, as long as we don't get any of it?

HARPAGON. Ho! Become clever, will you? I'll give you some cleverness on your ears! [*He raises his hand to strike him, and crosses slowly and menacingly to him at C.*] Once more: Will you go?

LA FLÈCHE [*matter-of-factly*]. Very well. [*He pauses to brush off his coat casually, and straighten his hat; he looks at his fingernails, and then cocks his head.*] I'm going. [*He turns and starts U C, on to the steps.*]

HARPAGON [*suddenly running after him, crossing to the foot of the steps left of U C*]. Wait!

[*LA FLÈCHE stops, and turns back.*]

HARPAGON. Are you not taking something of mine with you?

LA FLÈCHE. You have nothing. What could I take?

HARPAGON. Come here and let me look. Show me your hands!

[*LA FLÈCHE puts his hands behind his back and grins. HARPAGON advances on him, up the steps, and LA FLÈCHE dodges*

*him, nearly dancing, several times. They crisscross on the steps till they are at the foot of them, HARPAGON left of LA FLÈCHE. HARPAGON seizes him by the shoulders.]*

HARPAGON. Show me your hands!

LA FLÈCHE [*suddenly and nonchalantly showing them*]. There!

HARPAGON [*looking at them very closely, disappointed, and becoming flustered*]. The others?

LA FLÈCHE [*incredulously*]. The others?

HARPAGON [*doggedly*]. Yes!

[*LA FLÈCHE looks at his two hands, puzzled. Then he looks as though he remembered something, puts his hands behind his back, feels around for them, and finally turns his back to HARPAGON, exhibiting both hands there.*]

LA FLÈCHE. There!

[*HARPAGON looks them over carefully and then gives them a slap, which spins LA FLÈCHE around to him again.*]

HARPAGON [*pointing to LA FLÈCHE'S breeches*]. Have you crammed nothing in there?

LA FLÈCHE. Look yourself.

[*HARPAGON begins feeling LA FLÈCHE'S breeches carefully down the side of his leg.*]

HARPAGON. These wide breeches are fine receivers of stolen goods.

[*Suddenly, he inadvertently tickles LA FLÈCHE, who gives a little squeal and crosses one leg over his other one. HARPAGON grunts and begins to work around the back of the breeches.*]