

THE WIDOW a la MODE

Donneau de Vise

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THE WIDOW a la MODE

Donneau de Vise

translated by F. J. Morlock

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MIRIS, the widow of Cleon

ORPHISE, her sister

BEATRICE, her servant

CRISPIN, Cleon's valet

DAME JEANNE

CLIDAMIS, heir of Cleon

LUCILLE, a neighbor

ALCIPE: a Business Man

DAMIS, lover of Miris

A Tailor

A Boy

A Commissary

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DAME JEANNE: Crispin, hurry up. Quick, get up. Crispin! He pays no attention. You always have to go find him. Crispin, wake up. May the Devil take you. Crispin! If he doesn't answer I'm going to break the door down.

CRISPIN: Who's calling me?

DAME JEANNE: The Nurse.

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CRISPIN: It's not day yet. I'm sleeping.

DAME JEANNE: You will be able to see very closely when you are outside.

CRISPIN: What are you crashing about for, old lady? And why are you bothering me. You take moonlight for daylight?

DAME JEANNE: He's dead.

CRISPIN: Who?

DAME JEANNE: Mr. Cleon.

(ENTER Beatrice)

BEATRICE: Dame Jeanne,

DAME JEANNE: I'm running.

BEATRICE: Alas! He isn't breathing. Come quickly. Help!

DAME JEANNE: I cannot wake him.

BEATRICE: Come up, I tell you. I will make him get up! Oh how this unhappiness afflicts me. I have no hope of his health. Crispin, hurry up. Mr. Cleon is worse. Crispin.

CRISPIN: I'm coming.

BEATRICE: He's coming and he doesn't budge.

CRISPIN: (coming in, rubbing his eyes.) You can't see in this cursed house.

BEATRICE: Run quickly to a doctor and don't stop.

CRISPIN: You have some plan to hurry on his death?

BEATRICE: You must get ready and dress in a hurry.

CRISPIN: My poor Master, alas!

BEATRICE: Ah, I am losing patience. Go quickly. Mr. Cleon is in extremity.

CRISPIN: What! Is there no more hope for his life?

BEATRICE: He's very bad.

CRISPIN: But do you believe that he will die?

BEATRICE: Yes, yes, if you don't get help in a hurry.

CRISPIN: I think that Madame has a wealth of sorrow.

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CRISPIN: I think that Madame has a wealth of sorrow.

BEATRICE: She takes this blow to heart. But get going.

CRISPIN: She must fear widowhood a great deal. They say she will lose most of her wealth.

BEATRICE: Oh, I'm furious.

CRISPIN: But did Mr. Cleon think to make a will?

BEATRICE: You won't go?

CRISPIN: I'm hurrying.

BEATRICE: Go then, quickly.

CRISPIN: But did he leave us something?

BEATRICE: What! Traitor! Do you want to let your master die without a doctor?

CRISPIN: I'm on my way.

DAME JEANNE: (reentering) Don't bother. Mr. Cleon has passed away. Just like a candle, alas, he was snuffed out.

BEATRICE: What, the poor deceased is really dead?

CRISPIN: (bawling) What, my master. I will never see you more?

BEATRICE: Perhaps you're mistaken.

DAME JEANNE: He's stone dead. I know well enough. I've been around plenty of corpses.

BEATRICE: What — is he really dead? I am in despair. I served him as my master and I loved him as my father! Oh, when I was sleeping the other night, I dreamed this. Ah, ah, ah, ah.

CRISPIN: Boo, boo, boo, boo.

DAME JEANNE: Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo.

CRISPIN: I believe we are crying every way. Hoo, hoo, boo, boo, ah, ah.

BEATRICE: It doesn't matter in what way we cry.

CRISPIN: You don't think so? The dead are honored in several ways. To cry even with art, irritates these days. And the great alone are mourned in music.

BEATRICE: The poor man.

CRISPIN: By his death we lose both.

DAME JEANNE: I never nursed a less irritating patient. He was always agreeable and docile. He always spoke to me in a civil way. Even when asking for the bed pan; as he did all too frequently.

CRISPIN: It's got to be admitted he was a bon-vivant.

BEATRICE: Good! I don't think we'll meet his like again. Boo, boo, boo, boo, boo, boo, boo ! How miserable I am. Ah, ah, ah.

CRISPIN: She's suffocating. It will be necessary to undo her stays. Her sighs are so huge they cannot pass.

BEATRICE: Having cried for the Master I am crying for Madame. Ah, if he had only left some children to his wife. His nephew is his only heir. It wouldn't have been so bad if he had children.

CRISPIN: The nephew will get everything.

DAME JEANNE: No children?

BEATRICE: What will she do?

CRISPIN: What can she do? She'll be treated as the Virgin widow.

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BEATRICE: She never had any ambition for that. Children were her passion.

CRISPIN: In such a necessity one ought to do something. She should have forseen this business. And so, without knowing it, one knows the job is done. She would have found the workers to do it.

BEATRICE: Clidamis once had a passion for her. I believe he would gladly inherit the wife along with the money.

CRISPIN: Between ourselves, I believe it. And I'd have sworn the master was somewhat jealous at times.

BEATRICE: Assuredly Clidamis loves her and I believe the master knew it.

DAME JEANNE: You haven't yet buried your master and you're already proposing a husband for his widow.

BEATRICE: But she's coming. How can we comfort her?

MIRIS: (entering with her sister Orphise) Alas, my dear sister, I am inconsolable. Ah, my poor husband.
(falling into a chair)

ORPHISE: Despair overwhelms her.

CRISPIN: Why then all these cries when they are useless?

DAME JEANNE: What! The good man is dead ! No! I cannot believe it. He had so much care that it made me drink a lot.

ORPHISE: Then go back upstairs. Don't leave him. You ought to care for him even after his death!

DAME JEANNE: Madame, I believe I can without displeasing you, give you some good advice. Sometimes one can laugh when one has ample reason to cry. Against all our ills the best remedy is to have wealth. Think about your situation. And that your sighs are not improving it. Without losing any more time think how to avert trouble.

MIRIS: What! Is this the advice you give me? You don't know me.

ORPHISE: Her wound is very deep.

MIRIS: My husband being dead, nothing of this world reaches me.

DAME JEANNE: Eh, my God! I've seen other widows besides you, who are thinking of their fortune while weeping about their spouse. I propose advice to you that you ought to take. A hundred devils! Your tears won't help you to live.

CRISPIN: Dame Jeanne is right. What do you say, Beatrice? You can't eat off tears and moans.

DAME JEANNE: In such a misfortune, on my oath, a widow the other day, on Sunday made a test. And I was able to serve her with such good will.

ORPHISE: Leave my sister in peace to dream of her sorrow.

CRISPIN: She wants to put her nose in your affairs.

DAME JEANNE: Me? Know, dear God, that nothing could make me do that. (She goes in)

MIRIS: What shall I do?

BEATRICE: Hey, there, there, your suffering will end. Soon you will be like everyone else.

MIRIS: Ah! I don't feel such light cares. But go, fetch Alcipe. He's a business man, and moreover, my advisor. He lives near here.

CRISPIN: I'm running. But lighten my sorrows, Madame. You will soon be dressing us in mourning, right?

ORPHISE: Without doubt.

CRISPIN: Good. I am going to choose the colors.

MIRIS: But listen. Find clothes for yourself, Crispin. Send my tailor. Ah, how these thoughts add to my sorrows.

CRISPIN: That's enough. Everything's going well. (Exit Crispin.)

MIRIS: (getting up) Let's talk a little business. Neither the nurse or Crispin are able to shut up. That's why, in front of them, I was afraid to speak.

BEATRICE: There. Courage, Madame.

ORPHISE: You must pull yourself together and tell us what you're going to do.

MIRIS: My husband's death has taken me by surprise. And, not having any children with him, losing him, I lose all my great wealth.

BEATRICE: That's what's troubling you.

MIRIS: Eh!

MIRIS: Believe me, Madame, your sorrow is just, and without blame you can give away your hand.

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ORPHISE: You ought to do it, sis.

BEATRICE: This remedy will soften the greatest sorrow.

MIRIS: Well, I'm resolved.

BEATRICE: You're doing right, Madame.

MIRIS: It really isn't contrary to the eternal love a woman owes her husband.

BEATRICE: Ah, the good man loved your well being more than you yourself do and he would rejoice to see you at your ease. That is, if among the dead, they are able to rejoice.

MIRIS: Carry a service vessel filled with gold to Damis' home, our obliging neighbor. I will keep my money box, after I've taken out a good sum, as well as my diamonds. To Lucille I will commit this duty. To carry to some faithful friends some old clothing with lace.

BEATRICE: When everything is out of the house all your troubles will cease.

ORPHISE: We need the night to do all this.

BEATRICE: When everything is broken don't think of anything except banishing the feelings that trouble your soul. For to say the truth, your dead husband was more important to us than he was to you. When one is young to have a husband, already aged, is a problem for the marriage. But let that pass. You had in the Master an inconvenient husband, of a bad temper, dirty, disgusting, emotional, jealous, bizarre, subject to a thousand ills, irritating, choleric and avaricious.

MIRIS: He was my husband.

ORPHISE: He loved her tenderly. And at least at this moment, my sister must have her soul badly hurt and be plunged in misery.

BEATRICE: According to custom, she should be very upset. I agree. And I don't suggest that her heart shouldn't be heavy today. On the contrary to the eyes of the world she ought to show a profound sadness. What I tell you, I swear I am doing. And of all people, who cried louder than I? Soon, without thinking, you'll feel as you were. But at first, when one loses someone, the pain is hard.

MIRIS: It always ought to be, when one loses a husband.

BEATRICE: Hey, what! You want us to pretend with you. Cry till you're surfeited. Cry, cry, Madame. Why must we cry when we are laughing inside? Often custom and the law require us to cry when we feel like laughing. (knocking) But someone knocks.

MIRIS: (turning and throwing herself down) Open. Your expectations are vain. Having lost all my death is certain. (low) It's Alcipe.

ALCIPE: I am coming alone to speak to you, knowing quite well that time alone can console you.

BEATRICE: (aside) I believe a rich spouse might do it as well.

MIRIS: Alas, you know the cause of my sorrows. But, listen, sir. (Miris, Alcipe and Orphise speak low)

BEATRICE: They talk so low. Why do dead men cause so much trouble?

ALCIPE: They can't help it.

MIRIS: Ah, cruel custom. I cannot conceal my misery is mortal. I wish so much to die today. Who could live without wealth, with so much sorrow?

BEATRICE: I'm of your opinion. Without money you cannot live.

MIRIS: Ah, my poor husband, I'm coming to follow you.

ALCIPE: But if his heir wishes to marry you?

MIRIS: Hey, what! You dare to propose to me today?

ALCIPE: What I told you ought to incline you to it.

ORPHISE: You ought to listen to this healthy advice. And think: when fate treats you harshly, that someone beside Clidamis has a passion for you.

BEATRICE: He has it still, if you wish, Madame. And your tearful eyes will rekindle it.

MIRIS: Ah, don't hold such talk with me.

BEATRICE: Oh, well. They can speak of it some other time. You are afraid of sinning against decency.

MIRIS: But if he had only indifference for me, would you think it good that being a widow for half a day, my interest obliged me to show him love?

ORPHISE: Only permit him to revive a dead hope, that he may still love you. But someone's knocking on the door.

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MIRIS: Open. Ha, ha, alas. How strong is my sorrow. But I mustn't hinder myself because of Crispin.

CRISPIN: Madame, in a short time I've been everywhere and notified everyone. While sighing I told them what had happened and they listened as if about to laugh. And they are coming here to weep with you.

BEATRICE: Someone's at the door.

MIRIS: (low to Alcipe) Don't open.

ALCIPE: No. I have nothing more to say. Count on me. Take courage. Hide your papers. In a short time you will see me and I will do everything I can for you. Promise. (Alcipe leaves)

MIRIS: Open. Leave me here. No; nothing can console me.

CRISPIN: (opening the door) Is she prepared?

BEATRICE: She knows very well how to play her part.

MIRIS: Oh, my poor husband whom I lost this very day.

LUCILLE: (entering) I come as your friend, your neighbor, because I feel for you.

MIRIS: My unhappiness is immense; my trouble is infinite.

LUCILLE: We all have to die; we will have our turn.

BEATRICE: What a nasty way to console people.

LUCILLE: He's really dead?

CRISPIN: So much the worse.

LUCILLE: What a loss, madam.

BEATRICE: Does she think she's going to banish sorrow from her soul this way?

CRISPIN: That's the way to make things worse.

BEATRICE: That's the way it's done these days.

MIRIS: When the poor departed was angry with me, after softening me up he didn't know what to do.

BEATRICE: It's true. In order to appease him often one had to carefully undress and bathe him.

LUCILLE: He was nice when he was with women. Always laughing; always trying to kiss them. Don't cry. Oh, oh, and how your great heart throbs. Can't stop beating from sorrow. Hey, hey, hey! When crying one loses all one's charms.

BEATRICE: Do as I do and restrain your tears. Ah, ah, ah. But I'm crying.

CRISPIN: There's nothing to it. You laugh.

BEATRICE: Me. I'm laughing.

CRISPIN: Yes. You laugh the way they cry in Paris. I have a clever wit. Ah, ah, I don't know what I'm saying. And if I cry also, I cry in order to laugh. But still, my intent is to be afflicted. At this time my mouth laughed without my permission.

MIRIS: To die so suddenly.

BEATRICE: Being young and pretty your pain won't last forever. And you can wear out four husbands.

CRISPIN: (aside) At least we'll have several charivaris.

LUCILLE: Time eases the worst of sorrows.

CRISPIN: (speaking low to Beatrice as Miris whispers to Lucille) Tell me, you who know my mistress' wealth. Will she have enough to do something for us?

BEATRICE: Alas.

MIRIS: Take these. (giving diamonds) Hide them so that no one will see them.

LUCILLE: Count on me.

CRISPIN: To cry without saying anything to me! You couldn't give me a worse answer.

MIRIS: Ah, how I lose friends and wealth today. To whom can I confide? Who will be my support? Men are deceivers and every day you find that the friends of the husband are not the friends of the widow. But how chagrined I'll be to see myself during my first year of mourning: all dressed in black!

ORPHISE: Better wear a blindfold, sis.

MIRIS: That's my trouble. For I have a strong dislike for blindfolds. What will I do with a blindfold? Oh, my poor husband!

LUCILLE: You have a good complexion. It will become you. Goodbye. And believe, my dear, that the excess of your sorrows touches me to my very soul. (Exit Lucille)

MIRIS: A handkerchief, Beatrice.

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ORPHISE: You haven't eaten.

BEATRICE: I am going to go find something. (Exit Beatrice)

MIRIS: My afflicted spirit prevents me from eating.

CRISPIN: Her sadness is profound.

MIRIS: After such a misfortune I am going to quit the world.

CRISPIN: When a woman has once been touched by a man it isn't without reason that he is regretted. He was still speaking yesterday, my poor late master, and near as death was, he was unaware.

ORPHISE: He could speak yesterday and die today.

CRISPIN: I will never find another master like him.

BEATRICE: (returning with food) Here take it. But try not to cry any more and ruin your face in the wash. I just looked at the pot and having found it good, I thought I should bring you some broth. You ought to try it.

MIRIS: I don't know.

CRISPIN: I bet she cannot do it.

MIRIS: I don't have the courage.

ORPHISE: But you ought to take it. It will do you good.

MIRIS: Oh, well, give it to me. I'll do it to please you.

CRISPIN: But I hear a knock.

MIRIS: What shall I do?

BEATRICE: Take it quickly.

MIRIS: It's too hot. Take it, Crispin.

CRISPIN: That's what I need. I haven't eaten!

ORPHISE: See at the door.

CRISPIN: It's necessary in taking it to show a strong character.

BEATRICE: (having opened hears a voice)

VOICE: How is Mr. Cleon since yesterday?

BEATRICE: He's dead.

VOICE: That's fine.

CRISPIN: My word he was good. But he gave me a hard time.

BEATRICE: Take your broth without waiting any more.

MIRIS: Give it here.

CRISPIN: What? I just ate it like you told me.

MIRIS: You were supposed to hide it.

CRISPIN: I thought I was supposed to drink it down in a hurry.

BEATRICE: If —

MIRIS: Take care what you say. In the mood I am in don't make me laugh.

BEATRICE: Then take this biscuit which I took for myself. You ought to eat it.

MIRIS: Oh, for God's sake shut up.

ORPHISE: But take it, sis. I'm the one who's asking you. You have to eat a bit to conserve your strength.

MIRIS: Oh well, give it to me. I have no appetite. (she devours the biscuit)

CRISPIN: Look at that after all her scorn.

BEATRICE: Instead of afflicting yourself think that widowhood has its pleasures just like marriage. No longer disturbed you will henceforth see the world at your liberty.

MIRIS: Ah, my poor husband. (chewing the biscuit.)

BEATRICE: That's not him, Miris, it's a muffin.

ORPHISE: Her pain pierces her to the soul.

CRISPIN: Plague. How fast she eats. It's almost gone.

ORPHISE: Her pain pierces my heart.

BEATRICE: She eats with fury because she's afflicted.

MIRIS: I'm full.

CRISPIN: That's easy to believe. When you eat that fast you have to have a drink.

ORPHISE: Won't you have something to drink, sis. How'd you like some wine?

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MIRIS: Yuck!

ORPHISE: It will refresh your spirit. (knocking)

MIRIS: Now who is it? If they learn I'm eating, a hundred busy bodies will find it strange and say that I shouldn't do it no matter how you urge me.

CRISPIN: (opening the door) The day a husband dies nobody eats or drinks.

BEATRICE: As for me, I find that custom strange.

MIRIS: Oh, don't talk about it.

ORPHISE: Why, it's Mr. Damis.

DAMIS: (entering) Having always vowed to be your friend I ask you to witness how much I share in your sorrows.

CRISPIN: I am greatly obliged to have you console the afflicted. If your wife died people would do the same for you.

MIRIS: I wish that my extreme sorrow allowed me to give a better response to your kindness.

DAMIS: Robust and healthy, I don't know how death took him in only four days. I think I still see him in his chamber walking with his night cap.

CRISPIN: That would be a white one. The one he wore yesterday was a yellow one.

BEATRICE: Alas.

DAMIS: Console yourself.

MIRIS: Ah, if I lose my husband, time can never ease my pain. When something was bothering the poor man, he'd tell me about it all night.

BEATRICE: What, Madame, do you complain only about this subject? If the poor man hadn't done it, there'd be nothing much to complain of.

MIRIS: He had a good soul.

ORPHISE: One cannot find a better person.

DAMIS: I believe that one cannot even mourn him enough.

BEATRICE: All men are good when they are dead.

DAMIS: Let us go. In sorrow, everybody's a nuisance. (Exit Damis)

CRISPIN: To leave this way is to leave fashionably.

MIRIS: Now I can breathe a minute.

BEATRICE: Yes, if you wish it.

ORPHISE: Go up quickly to hide your papers.

MIRIS: If someone asks for me say that I cannot be seen.

ORPHISE: Go on, I know what to do. Again, something irritating. (Exit Miris)

CRISPIN: Despite his faults, she still really loves him.

BEATRICE: He caused her sighs.

CRISPIN: Someone's coming.

(Enter Clidamis)

BEATRICE: It's Clidamis.

CRISPIN: I believe he laughs in his soul.

BEATRICE: Sir, right now one cannot see Madame.

CRISPIN: If the poor departed had left a will. But, alas, he died so suddenly.

CLIDAMIS: I take pity of the sorrows which heaven sends you.

CRISPIN: Heirs like you who find money to count, never cry from joy. They've not the time to feel sad.

BEATRICE: With wealth can one feel sorrow?

CLIDAMIS: All that I have is for your mistress.

BEATRICE: Crispin, go put on your clothes.

CRISPIN: I will return in a moment! (Exit Crispin)

BEATRICE: To hear you talk one would say your soul retains the ardor of its first flame.

CLIDAMIS: I swear that I loved your mistress before marriage took her under its laws. But what do I say? I feel that my heart still loves her. And to tell you more, that I feel I adore her. But the time is unsuitable to reveal my passion and I cannot hope to obtain recognition.

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BEATRICE: I intend to be a big help to you if you second me.

CLIDAMIS: Tell me what can be done.

BEATRICE: Show her that all the wealth of her departed spouse belongs to you according to law. For that, I think it will be necessary to apply promptly to the courts and have a magistrate appointed.

CLIDAMIS: That would insult her. I don't agree with you. I ought to spare her such a charming sight.

BEATRICE: From decency she must feel she is forced to suffer the ardor of the passion your soul is full of. That way she can meet the criticism of the self appointed censors who criticize morals. Leave the rest to me.

CLIDAMIS: Give me your word.

BEATRICE: Go. I promise you to play my role well. Don't waste time. (Exit Clidamis) So. My way, she'll save all her wealth.

CRISPIN: (entering with tailor and used clothes dealer) Here's your tailor and used clothes dealer.

DEALER: I've come to find you as you told me. And I haven't forgotten your mourning. Take it. I'm sure it's made for you.

TAILOR: (measuring) There.

BEATRICE: Very good.

CRISPIN: I'm in a hurry and I've a lot to do.

DEALER: You already tried the doublet and the pants at my shop.

CRISPIN: Right.

DEALER: You won't find anything better. But let's look at the coat.

CRISPIN: We'll see.

BEATRICE: This is good, too.

TAILOR: (to Beatrice who's on a ladder) But why are you perching thus?

CRISPIN: I'm dreaming and I don't understand anything.

BEATRICE: It shouldn't be hard to understand. I intend that you take my measurements while I'm on this ladder. I want a long train.

CRISPIN: You'll have to appease her.

TAILOR: I'll satisfy her if she'll let me do it.

DEALER: (low to Crispin) She intends to prevent any theft.

TAILOR: Do you know I can hear you talking?

BEATRICE: That's too small.

TAILOR: But Madam will be enraged and I want to talk to her before doing anything.

DEALER: It's practically new.

CRISPIN: I'm afraid it's not new.

DEALER: It's completely new I tell you and it's apparent to anyone. Jumps right out at you.

BEATRICE: Kindly don't steal when you make my dress.

DEALER: You accuse him wrongly; he never steals.

TAILOR: They know rag men.

DEALER: They know tailors.

CRISPIN: I don't know which of the two is the better.

TAILOR: Goodbye. Kindly let me know what I should do about your train. (Exit Tailor)

BEATRICE: There. Let's see this outfit.

CRISPIN: I've already bought them from him.

BEATRICE: You say this outfit has never been worn?

DEALER: I'm selling it as is. But I bet only a brand new one could serve him better.

CRISPIN: If you wish to have it, it would delight me.

DEALER: As I hope to have the honor to serve you, I will make it cheap. Without wasting time in useless words give me three crowns.

BEATRICE: Well, without bargaining, I'll give you half that.

DEALER: I would give you more from friendship.

BEATRICE: Well, I'd give you only half a crown more.

CRISPIN: (looking at her pitifully) Beatrice.

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BEATRICE: That's enough. I give my word. Madame would criticize me if I gave too much.

DEALER: I lose. But I'll chalk it up to experience.

BEATRICE: Here. (giving money)

DEALER: And the boy gets nothing?

BEATRICE: Here again.

DEALER: Goodbye. You are an honest woman. (Exit Old Clothes Dealer)

BEATRICE: Alas, my poor master.

CRISPIN: By the way, he is dead.

BEATRICE: I can see that your clothes rejoice you so much you are thinking no more of it.

CRISPIN: I forgot my sorrow. But I believe I hear my mistress coming down. (Enter Miris and Orphise)

CRISPIN: I've got my lace mourning. Beatrice paid for it.

MIRIS: He tried it on first, I hope.

BEATRICE: Yes.

ORPHISE: How much did it cost?

CRISPIN: (low to Beatrice) Are we going to jack it up?

BEATRICE: It cost me 5 crowns.

CRISPIN: She's very credulous. They easily deceived her.

BEATRICE: I saw your tailor, and said that for your honor you wished to make me a long train for my dress.

CRISPIN: She's the one who doesn't want the tailor to rob her.

BEATRICE: He's a very honest man. He told me a hundred times he wouldn't ever take four for a fabric.

CRISPIN: No, because he couldn't take more.
(Enter a Court Officer/Commissaire/Bailiff)

CRISPIN: But what do I see, Madame? This is a man who frightens women; who worsens the pain in the homes of the departed and who, often enough, widows greatly fear. A Bailiff who takes bad measures.

BEATRICE: Then you come here to seal our locks?

CRISPIN: We say nothing to you of the wealth which is here. And now it is necessary to seal we will conceal. And we will do a lot without applying wax.

BAILIFF: I excuse your sorrow and wish to leave you to your grief. But I have a writ from Clidamis to seal and inventory.

ORPHISE: Go up with him, Crispin. (Exit Bailiff and Crispin)

MIRIS: Oh, god, how upset I am. See, see now, how Clidamis loves me.

BEATRICE: Perhaps it's nothing but a stratagem which he believes will force you to see him. He's trying to demonstrate to you in a small way how much power he has.

ORPHISE: If Beatrice is right, relax. You will gain 2000 crowns income by this.

MIRIS: From what you tell me, he doesn't love me. Wealth charms him more than my weak attractions.

DAME JEANNE: (entering) Mercy God. You know, Mr. Bailiff, that I fear nothing.

ORPHISE: Why don't you shut up?

DAME JEANNE: Me, shut up? No, no. I will not shut up. No one can outrage Dame Jeanne to this point. I will make you see that I have courage.

MIRIS: But what's wrong with you?

ORPHISE: Then tell us what outrage happened?

DAME JEANNE: I'm not going to leave without speaking. I want to give him reason. I haven't lived to let somebody surprise me. And he doesn't know his business, but he's going to learn it.

ORPHISE: But tell us: what is all this rage about?

DAME JEANNE: It suffices as they say that his isn't much.

MIRIS: Don't make so much trouble. I don't want anything to do with this business. And you would put me in trouble with the Bailiff.

DAME JEANNE: He's a bad counsellor who ought to know my rights. And who separates me according to his laws. By God, I intend that he do me justice. But as you wish me to explain to you: know that he wants to seal that which I ought to have. If he knew his job properly he would know that he shouldn't touch certain clothes that the deceased often give their nurses.

THE WIDOW a la MODE

MIRIS: Don't bother me any more about this. Rely on me. You won't need to complain. I'll get what's yours.

BEATRICE: Madame it isn't time to make a mystery of the love that **CLIDAMIS** has for you but doesn't know how to express. He told me — me, myself, today. You can have the wealth he has for little more than giving his love the right to hope.

ORPHISE: Sis, in conscience think that you ought to consider your benefit.

BEATRICE: Can you do better?

ORPHISE: Everywhere they say he's a fine man. And, having already known how to please him, you ought to love him. Do it before the Bailiff leaves.

MIRIS: Yes. What will people say?

BEATRICE: Oh. What people will say is not a consideration. And far from thinking of it, consider, Madame, that when sorrow leaves you for in time that's a certainty, you'll want to laugh often after having wept. Now that's impossible when one is too poor. Despite yourself you'll always be weeping.

MIRIS: My husband only died today. This effort —

BEATRICE: Well, after some time he will be very long dead. From generosity your lover will turn furious and will allow you to weep awhile longer from policy. There he is. (to Clidamis) You ought to speak to her without delay. Madame by me wishes to know your love.

CLIDAMIS: Very good. My sad heart sighs for her attractions. I wouldn't have spoken of it to her so soon. (to Miris) Madame, as yet I dare not speak to you of the pressing ardor with which I feel myself burning. When you have so many sorrows of the soul it is not time to speak of a passion.

ORPHISE: Answer.

MIRIS: I cannot.

BEATRICE: You ought.

MIRIS: Leave me.

BEATRICE: But you ought to say something.

MIRIS: Oh. Please shut up.

CLIDAMIS: I see with what emotion you suffer my presence.

BEATRICE: At least say something that will give him some hope.

MIRIS: Sir, you know very well, that my husband having died today, I cannot. But when I think of you. But I am not thinking of what I am going to do. And for a while at least, my heart must be silent.

ORPHISE: What you tell him nothing?

MIRIS: Oh, God, what a situation.

BEATRICE: But do you hate him?

MIRIS: Me hate him? Alas —

BEATRICE: What do you mean to say with that "alas"?

ORPHISE: From love and sorrow her aching heart sighs.

BEATRICE: I think that "alas" is a sign of tenderness for you. And you will see that she will speak for you. This is all she can do at present and I think that's all she needs to say as a new widow.

CLIDAMIS: This language of the heart. This obliging "alas". Does it announce my happiness?

BEATRICE: Ah! Don't press her. Silence is consent. It should suffice for that she only sighs without rejecting your love.

CLIDAMIS: What don't I owe you!

MIRIS: I've said too much. Goodbye. (Exit Miris.)

BEATRICE: This was a plain answer to your flame. You see what my work has done for you?

DAME JEANNE: Make the Bailiff leave promptly.

CLIDAMIS: That's my intent.

ORPHISE: So much the better.

BEATRICE: (to audience) You see plainly that we've all been made to laugh from all this weeping.

FINAL CURTAIN