

# **THE COURIER FROM MILAN. A PARADE**

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2002

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Etext by Dagny

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CHARACTERS:

ISABELLE  
LEANDRE  
HARLEQUIN

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**LEANDRE:** At last I'm determined to get a valet to serve me. A gentleman cannot scrape the mud off his slippers all by himself and, especially when he wants to send a letter to a friend, he needs someone to write it for him; and if I meet one, I will get him.

**HARLEQUIN:** (enters, singing) Valet for rent, to lease, to nourish, to pay.

**LEANDRE:** It seems that chance is meddling in my affairs.

**HARLEQUIN:** Valet to dress, to sleep, to drink, to laugh, etc.

**LEANDRE:** Hey, there! My friend, are you out of a house?

**HARLEQUIN:** Yes, sir, I just left by the window.

**LEANDRE:** Well, since that's the way it is, I am taking you into my service. Where have you served? Because in the end, one doesn't take a valet without knowing.

**HARLEQUIN:** Yes, sir, I served a love child whose wig I powdered, etc.

**LEANDRE:** Now, that's wonderful. But what will you take to be in my service?

**HARLEQUIN:** Oh, don't put yourself to any trouble, I am not fussy, I will take whatever presents itself.

**LEANDRE:** I'm asking you, on what foot you want to be mine?

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**HARLEQUIN:** On both, sir.

**LEANDRE:** Now that's good; I see that you are a very pleasant character, and all you have to do is serve me well and I will make your fortune. Go knock on the door of Miz Isabelle, of whom I am amorous.

(Harlequin performs some Lazzis to knock on the door.)

**LEANDRE:** (to Harlequin) Go away, it's not fit that you hear the secrets that exist between two people who have a tender heart for each other.

**ISABELLE:** (coming out of her house) Ah! it's you, my dear Leandre; how are you?

**LEANDRE:** Certainly, always at your service Miz. You can dispose of your little servant.

**ISABELLE:** I have great joy in seeing you, when I see you, for I gave you my heart.

**LEANDRE:** The heart of a person like you, Miz, is very assuredly a great present. I am an honest man, Miz, and even if you were on a dunghill, I would be honored to marry you, despite the fact I am a man of condition.

**ISABELLE:** Sir, I know the love you do me the honor of bearing me, and if you hadn't given me a sou until today; and if you were to repossess the bed and armchair you'd made me a present of, I wouldn't be able to love you any more; so as to what this is all about, you did it with an honest girl.

**LEANDRE:** Miz, you make me blush, those little liberalities that I've had the honor to make you, for when a man has the generosity to give something, he mustn't be indiscreet about it; but there are many other trousseaus to return.

**ISABELLE:** You frighten me, adorable Leandre; has a misfortune happened to you so that your breeches are no longer worth anything?

**LEANDRE:** Pardon me, Miz, I still have two old pairs, but at last the glory of Mars calls me and these are the trumpets which separate me from you.

**ISABELLE:** What! You are going to the Italian front? What will become of me? How unhappy I am.

**LEANDRE:** Yes, Miz, my decision is made, and I am going to serve the king who has given me a post in the army.

**ISABELLE:** Charming Leandre; what! The sentiments of my passion have no power over you? You will leave me in the condition you are leaving me?

**LEANDRE:** Miz, you are putting me in despair, and I'm going to run my sword through my body if you don't cease those tears which are going to make me die of chagrin! Goodbye, but first of all, I want to have the honor of presenting you with a valet I took on a little while ago, so that he will serve you during my trip. Come here, Harlequin.

**HARLEQUIN:** Have you done, sir? I didn't look.

**LEANDRE:** Behold this triumph.

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**ISABELLE:** He's very well made, I am charmed, sir, that you have taken a Harlequin into your service; they are very alert.

**LEANDRE:** (to Harlequin) Behold Miz, of whom I have the honor to be amorous, and whom I deliver to your hands so you will guard her for me while I shall be at war in Milan; I still have a thing to recommend to you; you know, indeed, that my valise which is above, in my room under my bed, I have all my wealth in it, which is all I possess in the world, so that I would be reduced to beggary if it was stolen me, don't go steal it from me, it's all that I place in your care. Goodbye, Miz, I am leaving, I recommend to you to be faithful to me and to take care of your apple.

**ISABELLE:** Goodbye, my adorable Leandre.

(Exit Leandre.)

**HARLEQUIN:** So indeed, Miz, I've been ordered to guard you. They say there's nothing so difficult as to guard a bird of your type: still, I am counting on watching you so well that when my Master returns there won't be a hair missing.

**ISABELLE:** What, my dear Harlequin, you would really have the heart to thwart a pretty girl?

**HARLEQUIN:** Yes, I am hard by nature and if you were the devil himself—

**ISABELLE:** Oh, that's not the way I want to be taken care of. On the contrary, I intend that you allow yourself to be softened by my caresses.

**HARLEQUIN:** That would really be the devil, wait while I look at you a bit. Come on, fie, fie, you are ogling me, stop, stop, you there, the plague, you are frying me to a crisp.

**ISABELLE:** Come then, Harlequin, I'm a reasonable girl, who will never do anything against her honor, but Hell, it is really irritating not to be able to have the least diversion, and to be locked up like a poor dog on a leash, and I am quite sure that you won't have such a rigorous rigor for me; you are too reasonable and too polite for that.

**HARLEQUIN:** Aye—aye, aye, you are taking me by my good side, Miz, I no longer know how to stand it. Still as my Master is in Italy, I might even, yeah, look—

**ISABELLE:** What are you saying my dear Harlequin?

**HARLEQUIN:** Wait, Miz, you don't need thirty pounds of butter to make a quarter serving, I'm not so devilish that I am black, and one nail drives another. I confess to you the onion of your looks and the spice of your attraction, have made my heart into a hollandaise sauce.

**ISABELLE:** Now there's a very well turned compliment, but what do you mean my dear Harlequin?

**HARLEQUIN:** That if you will, Miz, I will take it upon myself to amuse you, to divert you, to ----- you during the absence of Mr. Leandre.

**ISABELLE:** You know quite well that one doesn't utter double entendres to a reasonable girl. Yes, I get a glimpse of what you want to tell me, but my dear Leandre has forbidden me to commit an infidelity while here, so I don't know how to do it without his consent .

**HARLEQUIN:** What, you would love me if he permitted it?

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**ISABELLE:** Yes, doubtless, I will love you with all my heart if he consents to it.

**HARLEQUIN:** Well, that's no problem, I am going to go to Italy to ask his permission.

**ISABELLE:** Then go quickly.

**HARLEQUIN:** I'm on my way, isn't it by the first street on the left?

**ISABELLE:** Indeed, I don't know the road to Italy, you ought to know the road, being a Harlequin from Milan.

**HARLEQUIN:** In that case I'll take the first one I see; they always told me that all roads lead to Rome.

**ISABELLE:** Goodbye my adorable Harlequin.

**HARLEQUIN:** Goodbye, Miz Isabelle but wait, I was guarding you for my master. Who will guard you for me?

**ISABELLE:** Right, is that necessary?

**HARLEQUIN:** The bother with your permission, if you please. (he pulls ropes from his pocket and ties her to the balustrade) I will release you on my return. (he makes several Lazzi) You'll be fine right there, but over here—  
Goodbye, Miz Isabelle.

(Harlequin leaves).

**ISABELLE:** (tied up) It must be confessed that for an honest girl it's really unfortunate that all the men who love her, one after the other, always suspect her of bad manners in their regard. That's not all, they make her suffer death and passion to satisfy their taste and their fantasies, and yet you must go this way or through the window . I adore Harlequin after having loved Leandre. But I will no longer love Harlequin if he doesn't bring me permission from my dear Leandre, he knows very well that all the while he's loved me I've never given myself to anybody without his consent, but there's a courier appearing and he will surely tell me some news. (to Harlequin who enters dressed as a courier) Courier, courier, lovable courier, can't you tell me some news of the war of the King of Italy?

**HARLEQUIN:** Yes, Miz, they say that the King has ordered that girls who have little mouths will have two husbands.

**ISABELLE:** (pinching her mouth) Is that really true? Why, truly, that's very well done, and I am ravished by it; and those who have big mouths what will become of them?

**HARLEQUIN:** It is ordered that they will have three.

**ISABELLE:** (opening her mouth very wide) So much the better, so much the better, the big mouths will have it.

**HARLEQUIN:** What, you don't recognize me, Miz?

**ISABELLE:** Ah! It's you, my dear Harlequin, untie me quickly from this.

(Harlequin unties her and makes several Lazzi.)

**ISABELLE:** Well, tell me promptly the news of Leandre.

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**HARLEQUIN:** First of all, he's not feeling well, because he is in abominable dugouts.

**ISABELLE:** O heaven, what are you telling me?

**HARLEQUIN:** Oh! What I am going to tell you will surprise you even more, if you knew what he's doing, truly he talks as if he doesn't know how to go to bed any more.

**ISABELLE:** Get to the point, you are making me very impatient.

**HARLEQUIN:** He's sleeping with his aunt, Miz.

**ISABELLE:** In that case, he's unfaithful, the ingrate.

**HARLEQUIN:** Right, right, all that's nothing, he told me to tell you that he won't be coming back here from Milan.

**ISABELLE:** He doesn't want to see me any more?

**HARLEQUIN:** And here's a letter that I'm giving you that he gave it to me to give you.

**ISABELLE:** Let's see what it is. (she reads) "Charming Miz Isabelle, I still have the honor of adoring you, as usual, but I have too great delicacy to insist that you remain in the condition of an unmarried girl during my absence, thus I beg you to marry, while waiting, my valet, Harlequin, although it may not be of the first water, it's still an honorable situation, of which you will have a meaningful relationship. I am your very obedient and very passionate servant, Leandre."

**ISABELLE:** I see that he still loves me and I consent to all that he wishes; but my dear Harlequin, you have no wealth, nor me either, how are we going to keep the household running?

**HARLEQUIN:** We don't have to do anything.

**ISABELLE:** Oh! I must have wealth to keep up my quality.

**HARLEQUIN:** Listen, Mr. Leandre left me a trunk in which he put his treasure, a mistress is more dear than a treasure, from what I've always heard tell; so, since he gave me his mistress, he will give me his treasure, right?

**ISABELLE:** No question, you must be grateful to this master who gives you all these things.

**HARLEQUIN:** Thus, when he returns he will still be the master of all he has given me.

**ISABELLE:** Then go, take the treasure. Carry it to the lodging so that we can set everything up first.

(Harlequin leaves, making several Lazzi, to bring the trunk which he finally puts on stage. New Lazzis to open it. Isabelle helps him to see what is inside. He opens it and Leandre jumps out.)

**LEANDRE:** What! Is this the way I am served during my absence? I will teach you, wretch, to steal from a master who wanted to enrich you.

(He wants to beat Harlequin who flees with the trunk on his back, upon which Leandre strikes with all his strength.)

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**ISABELLE:** What, very lovable Leandre, then you weren't in Italy?

**LEANDRE:** No, very amiable Isabelle, it's a trick I played on my valet so he won't come back. Let's go now to consummate our marriage .

**CURTAIN**