

DOCTOR SCRATCH

A Comedy Based on Crispin Medecin of Hautroche

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DOCTOR SCRATCH

A Comedy Based on Crispin Medecin of Hautroche

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<http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

English Version by Frank J. Morlock C 1986

Etext by Dagny

Characters:

English name	Original French name
Loveless	Lisidor
Gerald	Geralde
Dr. Bloodgood	M. Mirobolan
Augusta	Feliante
Olivia	Alcine
Lettice	Dorine
Martin	Marin
Peg	Lise
Scalpel	Chirugien
Big Tom	Grand Simon
Scratch	Crispin

Seven men, four women

The scene is London, around 1675.

ACT I.

The street before Bloodgood's surgery.

Martin

What, sir? You say you wish to remarry?

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Loveless

Yes, yes, I wish to remarry, and to better succeed, I have sent my son to Oxford under the pretext of studying for his degree.

Martin

I understand perfectly. But, may one ask the name of your bride-to-be?

Loveless

Certainly. It's Olivia.

Martin

What! The daughter of Dr. Bloodgood?

Loveless

The same.

Martin

You are joking, sir this girl isn't yet eighteen, and would be more suitable for your son than for you.

Loveless

I don't intend to let my son marry for three or four years.

Martin

But, sir, did you consider carefully what you are doing when you got this idea to marry Olivia?

Loveless

Did I consider carefully? Yes, yes, I gave it a lot of thought. She's beautiful; she's intelligent; she's young; she's idealistic. In fact, she has a lot of qualities that are simply not to be disparaged.

Martin

Well, these are beautiful traits to keep you from thinking for to be honest with you, none of these traits go with an old man.

Loveless

Huh? I am not that old!

Martin

Oh, yeah! If we were in those times when men lived seven or eight hundred years you'd only be an adoveless
Did I consider carefully? Yes, yes,—I gave it a lot of thought. She's beautiful; she's intelligent; she's young; she's idealistic. In fact, she has a lot of qualities that are simply not to be disparaged.

Martin

Well, these are beautiful traits to keep you from thinking—for to be honest with you, none of these traits go with an old man.

Loveless

Huh? I am not that old!

Martin

Oh, yeah! If we were in those times when men lived seven or eight hundred years—you'd only be an adolescent; but, in the times we live, you're well along in your race.

Loveless

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But, sixty years—

Martin

My word. Not to lie, I believe you have at least twelve or fourteen more years, for I remember that the other day the good Mr. Hurtle, drinking a cup of wine with you, said he was more than sixty-six, and that you were in college when he was in first form, and in a college play, he played cupid, and you played King Arthur.

Loveless

He doesn't know what he's talking about, he's one of those men who like to pretend they're older than they are.

Martin

Leave the age business aside, for, as they say, it's only for the grey hair. But, let us talk a little about your marriage. Do you believe that Dr. Bloodgood and Augusta, his wife, will give you their daughter—she being an only child? When one has only a daughter, and marries her—it's in the hope she'll produce grandchildren. But, not to sugar the pill, if you marry her, they run the risk of never having that joy—at least without some assistance—you understand me.

Loveless

None of this is your affair—and I know what I am doing. When she is my wife, we'll do what needs to be done.

Martin

My word, I doubt she ever will be your wife.

Loveless

Well, as for me, I am certain of it. Dr. Bloodgood is a man of his word—he has given me his solemn promise that she will be mine.

Martin

Well, that's something. But, you know that Augusta is a domineering woman—and, if I don't deceive myself, she has the look of wearing the pants.

Loveless

I know she's a little proud. But the advantages I will bring her daughter will soften her pride—and besides, a husband is always the master of his wife.

Martin

Always! My word. I've seen many that don't live agreeably, and who wish with all their heart that you speak true. But, here is Dr. Bloodgood who is leaving his house.

(Enter Dr. Bloodgood from his house.)

Bloodgood

Ah, it's you, Mr. Loveless?

Loveless

At your service. I came to speak of this business.

Bloodgood

What business?

Loveless

Oh, the one that—you know about it—

Bloodgood

What?

Loveless

The business we spoke about together?

Bloodgood

When?

Loveless

Huh—several times.

Bloodgood

Where?

Loveless

Several places.

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Bloodgood

I don't know what it is.

Loveless

About your daughter's marrying me.

Bloodgood

Oh, is that all? I thought you meant something else. About that? You know I've given my word. You've only to choose the day. Rest at ease. You are the master of that business.

Loveless

I'm obligated to you. But, have you taken the trouble to speak to your better half?

Bloodgood

No, but I give you her consent. She's submissive to my will—and I know how to deal with her if she makes any difficulty: I am a man who knows how to inject a little reason into a woman.

Loveless

I don't doubt it.

Bloodgood

Actually, I'd like to see her puff up in front of me. If she crossed me, I would make her see how stupid she is. But, thank heaven, I don't have to trouble. In a word, my wife does everything that I wish.

Loveless

Decide, if you please, which of us will speak of it first to her; it's a propriety I ought to observe, for, as you know, the ladies are jealous of their littler prerogatives.

Bloodgood

Willingly, and to get on with it, I am going to bring her here.

(Exit Dr. Bloodgood into the house.)

Loveless

Well, Martin? What do you say to that?

Martin

Everything's going fine, and I'm very easy because of your father-in-law.

(Enter Dr. Bloodgood with Augusta.)

Bloodgood

Here's our good friend Mr. Loveless, wife.

Augusta

Ah, I am his servant, and delighted to see him.

Bloodgood (low to Loveless)

It will be more becoming if you speak first.

Loveless (low to Bloodgood)

You begin, then I'll follow up.

Bloodgood (low)

You can explain better than I.

Loveless

Not at all. Besides, reason dictates that you should open the subject.

Bloodgood

It's up to you to take the first step.

Loveless

I've done it for you, and you ought to predispose her before I speak to her.

Augusta

At least, tell me what you're squabbling over, and why you brought me here.

Loveless

A mere bagatelle.

Bloodgood

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Wife, it's our friend Mr. Loveless who asks for the hand of our daughter in marriage.

Augusta

And, for whom?

Loveless

For me, madam, but under conditions which cannot be disagreeable to you. Doubtless, at first blush, my age would give you some repugnance to the idea—but, when you know, madam, that I will make you a fine settlement on your daughter, and that I will take her without a dowry—and that your husband has already given me his word—I dare to hope you will be as kind.

Augusta

All these matters are very weighty—but your age, sir, does not agree with my daughter's, and one often sees young women who make such marriages fall into disorderly conduct. The caresses of an old man are not meant for a young woman: in fact, they create an antipathy, and we see even nature itself revolt. Thus, to avoid these possible disgraces to my family, you will appreciate why I refuse to give my consent.

Loveless

But, your husband has given me his word.

Augusta

I believe it, but obviously he hasn't considered it carefully, for if he had, he would be—doubtless—of my opinion.

Loveless

Sir, you know you promised me.

Augusta

I believe, as I said before, that he did promise Olivia to you—but he can de-promise her to you—for believe me, it won't happen.

Loveless

Sir, a man of honor ought to hold to his word. Didn't you promise your daughter in marriage to me?

Bloodgood

Hey—all that is true—

Augusta

Well—if he promised her—I did not. And that's enough.

Bloodgood

Wife.

Augusta

Hey—my God, leave me alone. I know very well what I'm doing.

Bloodgood

But, it's necessary—to keep one's—

Augusta

It's necessary not to make such glib promises. One more time, it's never going to happen. And, your arguments couldn't be worse than they are. Goodbye, sir. Get it in your head that you will never marry my daughter.

(Exit Augusta.)

Martin (to Bloodgood)

Sir?

Bloodgood

What do you want?

Martin

She's submissive to my will—and I know how to deal with her if she makes any difficulty: I am a man who knows how to inject a little sense into a woman. I'd like to see her puff up in front of me. If she crosses me, I'd make her see how stupid she is. In a word, my wife does everything I wish.

Bloodgood

You are an impertinent!

Loveless

Indeed, Martin's right. And, this is the speech you made to me before we spoke to your wife.

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Bloodgood

True, but, we must be patient. It's not necessary to get carried away right from the start. Sometimes one ought to temporize. I promised you — All right, leave it to me.

Martin

All right, leave it to him. He'll spoil everything. My word, you'd better believe the words of the wife, and not those of this gentleman. You can see quite clearly that she is the sole mistress and master.

Bloodgood

You don't know what you are saying.

Martin

No, but I know you will be furiously repulsed in any siege effort. Tell me, if you please, who is the boss—you or your wife?

Bloodgood

I am.

Martin

Oh, yeah! In words, but not in deeds.

Bloodgood

You'll learn that I am master in fact, and in words, too. You are a fool!

Martin

Ah, sir, I'm not going to dispute that quality with you.

Bloodgood

Shut up! (to Loveless) Sir, once more—enough— Goodbye.

(Exit Bloodgood into the house.)

Martin

Ho, devilishly well said. Sir, you ought no longer to hope to marry Miss Olivia, because that opinionated and imperious mother will never give her to you. As for the husband, he's a fine doctor, a good astrologer, a great psychic—but he's not master in his own house. You cannot build on his promises.

Loveless

But, don't I see Scratch?

Martin

Yes, sir. It's Scratch, all right.

(Enter Scratch.)

Scratch

Ah! Sir, your servant. Good day, Martin.

Martin

Good day.

Loveless

What brings you to town?

Scratch

Your son sent me by coach. I've only been in town a few hours.

Martin

By coach? You should have been sent on foot.

Loveless

Why did he send you?

Scratch

Sir, here's a letter that will tell you everything.

Loveless (reading)

Father—hmm— This isn't his style or handwriting. Are you making fun of me?

Scratch

No, sir. I ask your pardon. You see, I lost his letter on the way. So, I had a peasant who could write, make me

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another one. I know that he was asking for money, and that he promised to be a good boy in the future, and not to do it again. Read the rest of the letter.

Loveless

Huh—I'm satisfied with what I've read.

Martin

What, did you dictate to the peasant?

Scratch

Yeah, I did. What are you getting at?

Martin (ironically)

Nothing. But, it's well contrived, ho, ho.

Scratch

You know, you always talk big—but by God, remember—I'm smarter than you.

Martin

Ho, ho—without a doubt.

Scratch

Damn! Would you like a punch? You will see—

Loveless

Will you both shut up!

Scratch

But, sir, he always pretends to know everything, and thinks no one's as smart as he is.

Martin

Oh—I defer to you.

Loveless

One more time—shut up. But, Scratch, you say my son has spent all his money after four months.

Scratch

Yes, sir. If it wasn't true, I wouldn't say it.

Loveless

It's gone awfully fast. But, go get some sleep. I will talk to you about it later. I have some pressing business right now. Come on— follow me, Martin.

(Exit Loveless and Martin.)

Scratch

Hola! He thinks he's the only one who knows anything. Damn, when he takes up that grave attitude you'd think no one else in the world was as wise as he. He acts like he knows more than anybody.— But, let's go to Loveless's and get some money—of which my master has a great need. The expenditures he makes each day! But, I see him coming. It's not a good idea to tell him I lost his letter—he might abuse me.

(Enter Gerald.)

Gerald

Tell me, what are you doing here?

Scratch

Nothing, sir.

Gerald

What—two days after I left you, you haven't been to my father yet?

Scratch

No, sir, but I met him in the street, and that did our business.

Gerald

How is that?

Scratch

I gave him your letter, and told him your need for money. And that, briefly, is all that's happened.

Gerald

DOCTOR SCRATCH

And, what did he say to you?

Scratch

Nothing, except to go home and that he would speak to me later. At the moment, he has some business.

Gerald

Didn't he interrogate you about my behaviour?

Scratch

Very little, but I expect he soon will, and that is why I must wait on him.

Gerald

Be careful what you say, at least.

Scratch

Hey, leave it to me. We are not so stupid as we are badly dressed. He believes all my nonsense.

Gerald

Watch out for Martin at all times. As you know, he's got a big mouth.

Scratch

I don't care about him! God, because he knows how to read and write, he imagines that I am not as wise as he. I have a good idea to give him a fat lip.

Gerald

He's with my father?

Scratch

Yes, and wants to argue already. But, we've struck back. Go—rely on me. You know that I am not a mere talker—I get things done that you want done. Where are you coming from?

Gerald

Olivia told me she has something she wants to tell me, and that I would find her about this house.— But, I see her coming.

(Enter Olivia and Lettice from the house.)

Olivia

Gerald, you come too soon. I told you to come later. You're two hours early.

Gerald

You're right, madam, but you know the impatience that routinely torments lovers, and how they believe their pains are eased when they can see the place where they will meet the person they love.

Olivia

Gerald, stop the flattery, because I cannot stay long with you. I am going to pay a visit, and my mother will come to get me. You must know something, though. Your father wants to marry me.

Gerald

My father?

Olivia

Yes, your father—and my father has promised me to him. But my mother, you know, rules the roost, and has strongly rebuffed goodman Loveless. Now, see the mess we are in: for when I told my mother the love I had for you, and got her to be favorable to my wishes, your father wouldn't consent. Without your father's agreement, we can hope for nothing from my mother. Goodbye—I am afraid she's coming right behind me.

(Exit Olivia and Lettice. Lettice and Scratch make exaggerated bows to each other.)

Gerald

What should I do now, Scratch?

Scratch

What crazy logic made the old mercenary amorous at the age of seventy—four? Without a doubt, that's why he sent us to Oxford. But, we've got to prevent him from marrying. And that's done only with money—and then, we'll cut him out of the game. Look at the old gallowsbird: he needs girls of eighteen to cheer him up! He isn't completely disgusting—he digests it well—he just needs a refill.

Gerald

DOCTOR SCRATCH

But, what to do, Scratch?

Scratch

Try to speak to her alone—and that will resolve all your affairs. She will give you—many possible ways.

Gerald

Come, I am going to write a letter that you will deliver to Lettice when they come home.

Scratch

But, I ought to go to your father's house.

Gerald

I want you to deliver my letter before going there.

CURTAIN

DOCTOR SCRATCH

ACT II.

A large room in Bloodgood's house. There are several doors. There is a large table used to conduct autopsies.

Bloodgood

Lettice, Lettice, hey! Lettice?

Lettice

Sir?

Bloodgood

Fix this room up properly. I'm going to have some doctors watch the autopsy I will conduct on the corpse the public executioner is sending me.

Lettice

But, sir, why choose this apartment? In the past, you did it in the other house.

Bloodgood

True, but my wife wants me to use the house in the back so the main house will be free. I find she has an excellent idea.

Lettice

Ah! I don't doubt it.

Bloodgood

Because, where we are, over here, the garden which separates these two houses will hold down the noise the opinionated usually make on such occasions. There's always somebody who doesn't agree with the others, and who remembers an erroneous opinion—and makes more noise than four people put together.

Lettice

True, sir, none of you doctors can agree—your science is very uncertain, and you are the first to be deceived.

Bloodgood

Sometimes that happens, but it's not the fault of medicine itself.

Lettice

If it's not the fault of medicine, then, it's the fault of the doctors.

Bloodgood

That may be true, Lettice, but that's none of your business.

Lettice

No, but I can speak my mind, and if it's not my business today, it will be someday—in spite of me.

Bloodgood

Very good. But, let's change that subject, and think of receiving the cadaver—which should be arriving very soon. Put it in the vault, because I won't begin work until tomorrow. Now, I'm going to visit three or four patients for whom I don't have much hope. (leaving)

Lettice

I will do all that you say.

Bloodgood (returning)

Lettice, if you wished to do all that I say, you could show a little feeling for me, and not be angry.

Lettice

You shouldn't be having such thoughts with as nice a looking wife as you have. It seems to me that it's unreasonable, and you ought to be content with her.

Bloodgood

It's a strange diet that consists of only one food. In the end, it's boring.

Lettice

If you wife had the same ideas, what would you say?

Bloodgood

Oh, it's not the same thing. The pride of a man is to cajole several women, the virtue of a woman is to listen to no

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man except her husband.

Lettice

I don't believe in men having more privileges than women—and what men permit themselves to do, they dare not forbid their wives.

Bloodgood

The law intends that it be this way.

Lettice

In fact, it should be just the opposite. Those who made that law were ignorant—for there are stupid lawyers, just as there are stupid doctors. But, I see clearly—and will guard myself. Go see your patients—and leave me alone!

Bloodgood

No goodbyes, Lettice?

(Exit Bloodgood.)

Lettice

No goodbyes, sir. See this little twerp! Just leave him alone, and he'll do some beautiful things. It's a strange thing when these dogs of men can't content themselves with their wives—they must have some new toy.— If I am ever married, and my husband plays me such tricks— what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.— We'll see! Ah, Scratch, what do you want?

(Enter Scratch.)

Scratch

I was prowling around here to see if I could give you this letter. I saw Dr. Bloodgood leave and I entered, as you see.

Lettice

Close that door, so we can speak securely. I am going to close this one. Well—who sent this letter?

(They each go to a door and close it.)

Scratch

My master. He's becoming desperate because Olivia told him something touching her marriage to his father, Mr. Loveless.

Lettice

We'll have to prevent that—for it shouldn't be.

Scratch

The devil you say. You'd lose more than one person. You'd lose the advantage of having me for a husband—me—who loves you better than fifty could do.

Lettice

You think that's such a great advantage?

Scratch

Undoubtedly. But, let's not speak of that anymore. The gentleman likes the lady and the lady likes the gentleman. Tell me, what were you doing here with Dr. Bloodgood?

Lettice

Getting ready for tomorrow's dissection of a hanged man. And, because he's chosen this place to do it, he ordered me to spruce it up. Now— it's necessary for your master to take special measures to speak to Olivia. Since this place is going to be occupied, they won't have much change to meet here, as they used to do. Give me the letter; I will give it to Olivia and get a quick reply.

Scratch

Here—go quickly.

Bloodgood (knocking at the other door)

Hey, hey, Lettice—open up for me, I'm in a hurry.

Lettice

My God, what am I going to do? It's our master.

ACT II.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Scratch

Ah, dammit, I wish I were a long way from here.

Augusta (knocking at the other door)

Hey, Lettice—open for me.

Lettice

This is getting worse! That's our mistress.

Scratch

Ah—it's the devil!

Lettice

If she weren't here, I could put you in the vault.

Bloodgood

Come on, open for me, Lettice.

Lettice

I am lost.

Scratch

Me, too.

Lettice

Scratch, lie down in this table. I am going to say you are the cadaver of the hanged man.

Scratch

But—

Lettice

Don't argue—do what I tell you.

(Scratch lies on the table and Lettice opens the door for Dr. Bloodgood.)

Bloodgood (entering quickly)

You are waiting carefully on me! I forgot something around here, and I have got to go find it quickly.

(Exit Bloodgood by a door near the one which Augusta is knocking on. Lettice now opens for Augusta.)

Augusta

Where were you when I was calling you?

Lettice

I was busy receiving the cadaver—and I didn't hear you at first.

(Enter Dr. Bloodgood.)

Bloodgood

Wife—what are you doing here?

Augusta

I came to see if Lettice has got things ready as she was supposed to.

Bloodgood

See you, see you.

(Exit Bloodgood.)

Augusta

Lettice, take care of everything here. As for me, I'm going—cause I don't like to look at these things—they always give me gloomy ideas.

(Exit Augusta.)

Lettice

Go, go, madam, I will do all that is necessary. (shutting and locking both doors) Well, Scratch, my trick seems to have worked.

Scratch

ACT II.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Very well—and we got out of it cheaply—but, I must leave soon to avoid new trouble. Perhaps, I could remain a little longer, usefully—

Bloodgood (returning)

Lettice, Lettice, open up. It's me.

Lettice

Ah,—get back in the same posture: it's our doctor.

Scratch (getting back)

Devil take him.

(Enter Bloodgood.)

Bloodgood

I think I've got a hangover today. I've forgotten half the things I need. Certain pills I need. But, Lettice, what do I see here?

Lettice

It's the cadaver they just brought. It was already here when you came before.

Bloodgood

Very good. But, how come he still has his clothes on?

Lettice

They said they'd come and get them later.

Bloodgood (examining the body)

Nothing missing. I am of the opinion that since the body is still warm, maybe I ought to begin the dissection immediately. Go look for my lancet and scalpel. They're high up in my cabinet.

Lettice

But, sir, you aren't prepared. It would be very difficult, and besides, your patients are waiting for you.

Bloodgood

To wait two or three hours is no big thing.

Lettice

But, suppose they died?

Bloodgood

Not my fault. If they die in such a short time, my visit wouldn't help them much.

Lettice

But, a timely remedy—

Bloodgood

Go and bring me a box of twine and staples; you'll find them with my instruments. While he's still warm, I have a better chance of finding the duct veins and the reservoirs which conduct the chlye to the heart during fibrillation.

Lettice

But sir, you aren't going to take away my privilege to fix this place the way I want. Come tomorrow, as you said.

Bloodgood

Either go, or I will go myself.

Lettice

I will go, if you insist.

(Exit Lettice.)

Bloodgood (looking at the cadaver and addressing it)

He doesn't look evil—yet, there's something about his face. Yes, all the rules of craniotomy and physiognomy are false if this fellow didn't deserve to be hanged. I'll incise him here (pointing) and open him up; from his xyphoid cartilage right down to his pubis. (listening) His heart's still beating. Ah, if I had some of my colleagues here now. Particularly those who don't believe in the circulation of the blood—would I ever show them!

(Enter Scalpel, a surgeon.)

Scalpel

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Sir, sir, the squire is very bloated since yesterday. You ought to see him soon.

Bloodgood

I will go soon—but, I haven't the leisure at present.

Scalpel

But, the illness presses, sir— It's necessary that you come now.

Bloodgood

I cannot—go, bleed him, and I will see him in a couple of hours.

Scalpel

Sir, I don't believe that bleeding will do him any good.

Bloodgood

Bleed him, I tell you. I know better what I'm doing.

Scalpel

But, sir—

Bloodgood

But—one more time: bleed him!

Scalpel

But, but, sir—

Bloodgood

See here! I intend that he be bled. What business have surgeons to argue with doctors?

Scalpel

Sir, I won't bleed him any more. I believe another bleeding is capable of causing his death.

Bloodgood

He's going to be bled whether you like it or not. I will get someone else to do it, if necessary.

Scalpel

Do what you please, but I am not going to do it. Good day!

Bloodgood

Good day!

(Exit surgeon Scalpel to the street. Lettice returns from the house.)

Lettice (having heard)

I don't know how to find your hiding place—and besides, madam has told me you are wanted urgently at the Squire's.

Bloodgood

I'll have to put it off till tomorrow, Lettice. Put this cadaver in the vault.

(Exit Bloodgood.)

Lettice (closing the door after him)

Go. I will manage everything.

Scratch (getting up)

Without amusing myself in a discussion any further, I am going to leave immediately.

Lettice

Where do you intend to go?

Scratch

Devil knows! Where I intend to go? Let me out of here. What! You coolly get the scalpel and other gimcracks to dissect me in small pieces—and, you want me to stay! You're making fun of me.

Lettice

Understand, that when I left to find the equipment, I intended to hide it where he'd never find it. And that's what I did.

Scratch

Ho, that's a good idea. At first I was astonished, me—your future husband—that you had the sangfroid to see me cut up so barbarously.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Lettice

I would never have permitted it. But, pay attention to me. I am going to try to give this letter to Olivia, and get a reply.

Scratch

I don't want to wait here—

Lettice

Why?

Scratch

The word lancet makes me tremble. I am going to wait in the street— there I don't fear the doctor's scalpel. The fear I experienced in this place is more than enough.

Lettice

Go, but don't be impatient.

Scratch

I'll wait forever—when I'm out of here. (as he is leaving, someone knocks at the street door) Ah, the devil again! As soon as you open it, I'm running out.

Lettice

Don't do it, you'll spoil everything. Lie down again, quickly.

Scratch

I won't do it—anything could happen. Suppose he had a scalpel in his pocket?

Lettice

If I hadn't forgotten the key to the vault, I would put you there.

Scratch

Do what you want, but I'm not being put anywhere.

Lettice

Listen, I am going to get you a doctor's robe—you will say that, having learned he was going to do a dissection, you decided to pay him a visit. As for the cadaver, I will say I put it in the vault.

(More knocking. Lettice goes to a closet and returns with a robe.)

Scratch

Go, I prefer to be a doctor to a cadaver. But God, think how I am dressed. At least in these clothes, I run no risk of being split open. If I appear ignorant, there are plenty of other doctors who are more so.

Lettice (returning)

Hurry—put it on so I can open the door.

Scratch

Here I am now.

(Lettice opens. Enter Peg.)

Peg

Is the doctor here?

Lettice

No.

Peg

There he is. Why do you hide him from me? Just let me say a couple of words to him.

Scratch (gravely)

What do you want from me?

Peg

Sir, you know my mistress has lost a little dog that she loves to distraction—and she's very upset and blames it all on me. They tell me you're an astrologer as well as a doctor?

Scratch

I'm as wise in one as the other.

Peg

DOCTOR SCRATCH

That's why I came—to beg you to give me some news of this little dog.

Scratch

How long has it been lost?

Peg

Two days.

Scratch

At what time was it lost?

Peg

Eleven in the morning.

Scratch

What color is it?

Peg

Black and white.

Scratch (pondering)

That's all I need to know.

Peg (to Lettice)

Oh, the wonderful man—he's going to give us news of the little dog.

Lettice

Without a doubt.

Scratch

Listen—two days, you say?

Peg

Yes, sir.

Scratch

At eleven o'clock.

Peg

Yes.

Scratch

Black and white?

Peg

Yes.

Scratch

Take some pills.

Peg

Some pills?

Scratch

Yes.

Peg

But will pills find the dog?

Scratch

Yes.

Peg

But, still—what kind of pills?

Scratch

Blue pills. The kind you see at the pharmacy.

Peg

But, sir—

Scratch

I haven't the time to explain. Do exactly as I say.

Peg

How many should I take?

ACT II.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Scratch

Three.

Peg (offering a silver coin)

That's enough. If I find my dog this way, I'm going to send you a lot of customers.

Scratch

If you don't find it, it's not the fault of the pills.

Peg

I believe you. Goodbye, sir.

(Exit Peg.)

Scratch

Goodbye.

Lettice (after having reshut the door)

Well, Scratch, you've hardly put on your white coat when you get your first patient and make your fee.

Scratch

The devil! I can see it's a fine profession. Without knowing what I'm doing, I coin money—and without running the risk of playing cadaver.

Lettice

I could hardly prevent myself from laughing at your prescription. Blue pills for finding a lost dog.

Scratch

What the devil do you want me to prescribe—surgery? I can't read or write and I know nothing of what she was interested in. The idea of pills came to me, so I prescribed them. I'm taking off this costume, so I can wait in the street, as I said.

(More knocking.)

Lettice

They're knocking. Put it back on.

Scratch

Again? I fear it may be the doctor.

Lettice

Who cares? We'll pull the wool over his eyes, too.

(Lettice opens the door. Enter Big Tom.)

Tom

Doctor Bloodgood is home?

Lettice

Why?

Tom

I wish to speak to him.

Lettice

About what?

Tom

Something concerning me.

Lettice

Who are you?

Tom

I am someone you don't know.

Lettice

I know that! Does Dr. Bloodgood know you?

Tom

No, nor I, him.

ACT II.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Scratch (gravely)

What do you wish?

Lettice

This gentleman wishes to speak to you.

Scratch

Let him come in, and be brief.

Tom (after several bows)

People say you're a very good doctor, and also know about divination. So, you see, after I was told this, I decided to speak to you about a little matter.

Scratch

Speak a little more concisely.

Tom

You see, I love a girl in our village, and there's a certain character who visits her, too—I want to know if she loves me like she says, and if I will marry her. For to tell you the truth, I am doubtful.

Scratch

What's she like?

Tom

She's big, dark and pug nosed.

Scratch

Big, dark and pug nosed?

Tom

Yes, sir.

Scratch

Take some pills.

Tom

Some pills?

Scratch

Yes.

Tom

Some pills—

Scratch

Yes, some pills, green ones, that you can get at the pharmacy. You'll have to take at least ten, on account of your size.

Tom

But, it seems to me that pills are good for illness, not for—

Scratch

Go, do what I tell you, and the pills will do the rest. It's a science that few understand. If you were educated, and if you knew Latin, I would explain such things to you.

Tom

Sir, I know Latin, because I'm a judge in our village.

Scratch

You know Latin?

Tom

Yes, sir.

Scratch

Well, so much the better for you. Some other time—now, do what I tell you. Good day. I have other business.

Tom

Before going, I have to pay up.

Scratch

That's a good idea.

Tom (feeling in his pocket)

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Some pills—

Scratch (taking him by the arm and escorting him out)

Yes, some pills, yes, some pills, quickly, quickly, and good day.

Tom

Here's a gold piece. If this works—

Scratch

I accept. That's enough for the advice I've given you.

Tom (aside)

These savants are always so brusque! (aloud) Good day, sir.

Scratch

Your servant.

(Exit Big Tom.)

Lettice (having closed the door)

A gold piece and a silver crown, in so little time! Well, you ought to give me half, since I made you a doctor.

Scratch

Lettice, leave me alone. We will feed heartily together—but, for now—

(More knocking.)

Lettice

Someone's knocking again— We're getting lots of experience—

Scratch

By God, I'm getting out of here. Ah, here's the devil again—

(Enter Dr. Bloodgood.)

Bloodgood

Lettice, have you been dreaming?

Lettice

Sir, I just put the cadaver in the vault, and here is one of your colleagues who heard you were making a dissection, and is come to watch you.

Bloodgood (after several bows)

Sir, although I haven't the honor of knowing you—you are always welcome. But, I won't begin to work until tomorrow. If you wish to do me a favor, you could give ear to a little speech I wish to rehearse, —I believe it's a bit unusual.

Scratch

Ah, sir! I wouldn't miss it. The reputation of Dr. Bloodgood in these matters—is, in fact, one—that—I wouldn't miss it.

Lettice

Sir, if you want me to fix up this room, then you must give me freedom from all these interruptions.

Bloodgood

Later. Sir, I'd like to ask you some advice about a patient I'm treating.

Scratch

Sir, you'll excuse me, if you please, I have some pressing business.

Bloodgood

I will be brief. You know this patient had a quatrain fever—tertian and continual—and now, we have broken that fever. But, there remains a thing which worries me about him.— For, besides bad insomnia, which tires him out, his sputum is extremely white—and, to my way of thinking, a very bad sign, because as Hypocrites tells us, "a pituita alba, aqua inter cutem supervenit"—. As you know it's what the Greeks call "leucophlegmatia." If, according to Hypocrites, this white sputum is a sign that hydropsy ought to follow—do you think it necessary to prevent this by giving him a more powerful dosage?

Scratch

DOCTOR SCRATCH

You hardly need my advice. You are a man who—in fact, I can say not a thing.

Bloodgood

No, speak frankly—I will be very pleased to know your opinion about it.

Scratch

I am far from knowing very—

Bloodgood

As for me, I reason in this manner. I am not one of those physicians who cherish their own opinion, and who, rather than give up their opinion, let a patient die. Speak, I will listen to you.

Lettice (low to Scratch)

Say what you can. (aloud to Bloodgood) Sir, hurry up, I have a lot to do.

Bloodgood

Lettice, another minute, please.

Scratch

Sir, in these cases—I don't know if—about that—

Bloodgood

Hmm?

Scratch

Some pills—

Bloodgood

To give him some pills would ruin his constitution, which is already much altered by his other infirmities.

Scratch

I didn't say that. I said that some pills I took this morning oblige me to leave you instantly.

Bloodgood

Oh, I don't want to contradict you. Lettice, conduct the doctor where he needs to go. I am your servant.

(Exit Bloodgood into the house.)

Lettice

I am going to make haste to get a reply to this letter, and think, so as to manage things so that when the real cadaver is brought in, no one will notice the difference.

Scratch

And, I am going to wait for you elsewhere, without any more discussion.

CURTAIN

DOCTOR SCRATCH

ACT III.

The street before Bloodgood's surgery.

Scratch

Well, sir, what do you think of my adventure?

Gerald

I say they're unusual.

Scratch

Cadaver, doctor, cords, scalpels, gimcracks, pills—my God, it's too much.

Gerald

True, it was a lot to put up with—but, you've got to go back again.

Scratch

Me, sir?

Gerald

Yes, you yourself.

Scratch

By God, I don't want to go back for an autopsy, or to get beaten up— You could go yourself.

Gerald

It's true that I could—but, I'm afraid if I do, I might ruin my love affair. If Dr. Bloodgood sees me return, he won't fail to advise my father of everything that's happened. As for you—you risk nothing, because he doesn't know you.

Scratch

I hazard my back, my arms, my legs, my beautiful body. From the way I heard Dr. Bloodgood speak of cords and scalpels, a doctor has no more pity on a man than a lawyer.

Gerald

Still, it's necessary, my dear Scratch, to return one more time. And, you may be certain, that when I can, I will remember your good services and repay them.

Scratch

Ah, I don't doubt it—but, at least, tell me the reason I must return.

Gerald

Here! Listen to this letter you brought me. (reading)

"I have many things to tell you, but I haven't the time to write them. To achieve what we wish, it's necessary to employ several stratagems. Send Scratch as soon as possible. I will make every effort to give him a letter which will instruct you. If I can manage to talk with you in person, believe that I will joyfully do so. Goodbye. Love me as I love you, and rest assured that I will never marry anyone else. Olivia." Well, you see, Scratch.

Scratch

Yeah, I see. I've got to go back. But, if Dr. Bloodgood, who has seen me as both a cadaver and as a doctor, should recognize me—how do I get out of it without a beating—hmm?

Gerald

That's certainly rather a poser.— But, my dear Scratch, you must risk something for your master. Think, devise something so you run no risk.

Scratch

Listen—get me a doctor's outfit. I'd rather appear before him in that way than like a cadaver. For the rest, I'll get out of it the best way I can. I was almost caught by the pills. I'll escape by some other remedy.

Gerald

I'll go get the outfit you want. Now, go to my father's to get the money he promised you. Quite possibly, we'll have real need of it.

Scratch

I'm going—but teach me a bit of Latin. How to say, "I am a doctor."

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Gerald

Sure. Medicus Sum

Scratch

Medicus Sum. Medicus Sum.

Gerald

Very good.

(Exit Gerald.)

Scratch

Enough! Goodbye. Go think about the costume, and I will go to your father. Medicus Sum, Medicus Sum. What a nice thing to know Latin. Have to repeat, so as not to forget. Medicus Sum, Medicus Sum. That's it. Let's go see Mr. Loveless. But, I see him coming.

(Enter Loveless and Martin.)

Loveless

What are you doing in this place?

Scratch

Sir, I got bored at home and took a walk.

Loveless

Where is your master—tell me?

Scratch

What a fine question! He's at Oxford. Will you please give me the money so I can go back?

Loveless

Oh, yeah—tell me—where does he lodge at Oxford?

Scratch

He lodges near the university.

Loveless

What's the name of the street?

Scratch

The street?

Loveless

Yes.

Scratch

Oh—the name—the name— You were there before me, you know it well.

Loveless

But now?

Scratch

It escapes me. There are rascally names in that city which are difficult to retain, and I don't know how to get them into my head. And besides, I don't care. What's the good of fussing about these bastards of names? He stays where he stays.

Martin

He's quite right.

Scratch

Damn—shut up—or, you will see. Now—

Loveless

Patience.

Scratch

What I don't like is for him to mess into something which is none of his business.

Loveless

Shut up! What does your master do most of the time?

Scratch

DOCTOR SCRATCH

He studies—he often dines with people who speak Latin like the very devil. That I find funny—cause when they quarrel, it's as if they were strangling, and the whites of their eyes show. Afterwards, they calm down by each drinking five or six draughts.

Loveless

Not a bad story—but now, two or three persons have told me that he is in this city, and that they have seen him.

Scratch

Whoever said that's a liar, and I will defy him before all of England.

Loveless

We're not getting anywhere. Confess the truth. He's here?

Scratch

I don't confess anything, because it isn't true.

Loveless

Oh, I know everything. If you continue to pretend—

Scratch

You want me, then, to say something which isn't true?

Loveless

I've been lied to.

Scratch

Whatever you please, but it isn't true, it isn't.

Martin

Sir, leave this impudent fellow—he'll put you in an unreasoning rage.

Scratch

Impertinent! Damn—you liar—I'm going to let you have a taste of my knuckles.

(Martin and Scratch start to fight.)

Loveless (separating them with his cane)

Rogues, if you do not stop, I will give you a beating. Ah, damn—it's too much. Scratch, if your master isn't in London, I order you to go find him at Oxford, and tell him that when he lets me know his address, I will send him money by a banker in that city.

Scratch

But, sir—

Loveless

Don't talk anymore—don't come near my house if you don't want to get beat up.

Scratch

If you beat me, I don't know what I'll do.

Loveless

What will you do?

Scratch (shoving Martin)

I'll warm him up like the devil.

Loveless

Why did you do that to him?

Scratch

Hey, why do you plan to beat me?

Loveless

Because you're a cheat.

Scratch

Then, because he's a toady, and want to see me beaten.

Loveless (raising his cane)

I will teach you—

Scratch

Teach—and see if I don't teach you back—

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Loveless

Ah, God, I cannot suffer anymore of this.

(Loveless attempts to beat Scratch with his cane. Scratch breaks his head and causes Loveless to fall, then Scratch punches Martin and Martin falls on the other side. Exit Scratch.)

Martin

Ah, the traitor. I believe he's crippled me with a single blow.

Loveless

Martin, come help me to get up.

Martin

Hey, sir, I need someone to help me up, meself.

Loveless (getting up, aided by Martin)

The rogue—he will pay.

Martin

When I catch up with him, then he'll repent.

Loveless

I've hurt my shoulder falling.

Martin

And me—I believe my jaw's broken.

Loveless

He gave us a furious blow.

Martin

With all his might.

Loveless

Patience.

Martin

It's necessary to have a rematch: me against him.

Loveless

Go see if Dr. Bloodgood is at home.

Martin

What, sir? You wish to speak to him again about your marriage, after his wife has said "never" to your face?

Loveless

No matter. I wish to try again—tentatively.

Martin

Very good. That's to say, you want to be refused again. And, you enjoy hearing them chant your praises—rubbing your fur the wrong way.

Loveless

I admit to you, frankly, that I expect a refusal. But, I want to have the pleasure of telling Dr. Bloodgood that I will never think of him except as a man who is led around by the nose like a fool. That will console me.

Martin

But, what good will that do?

Loveless

Just do what I say—see if he is at home.

Martin (knocking at Bloodgood's door)

Hallo!

Lettice (opening the door)

Who is it?

Martin

Is Doctor Bloodgood here?

Lettice

No. Who wants him?

ACT III.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Loveless

Me, my dear.

Lettice

He isn't in. Do you wish to speak to madam? She's upstairs sleeping. I will go wake her.

Loveless

Let her sleep. My dear child, if you could, by your good offices, get her to consent to give me Olivia, I would—

Lettice

Give you Olivia in marriage? What the devil's got into you at your age?

Loveless

Really, I would—

Lettice

My word, whatever you would do would be worthless. But, do you have anything else to say to me? I am going back in the house.

Loveless

My dear, say to Dr. Bloodgood that his friend, Loveless, came to see him—and that I pray he thinks about what he promised me. Good day, child.

(Exit Loveless and Martin. Enter Scratch, as a doctor, from the opposite direction.)

Scratch (talking to someone offstage)

At home, at home, I tell you. I will reply to you in good time.

Lettice (hearing this, awaits Scratch)

What's up, Scratch—and how'd you get rigged up like this?

Scratch

I saw two people who told me they were studying medicine and asked me advice about the—the—transconfusion of the blood. They insisted I speak. Almost had to be rude to get away from them.

Lettice

What did they tell you?

Scratch

How the devil do I know. Arteries—littoral blood—arterial— An escalation where the blood comes in— Something about an anima—animal who doesn't know any better. The bad blood flowing back. The good in the veins of some other animal. Now, devil take them with all their arguments.

Lettice

You ought to prescribe pills.

Scratch

I would have, with all my heart, but they each had fifty in their pockets.

Lettice (laughing)

But, why are you like this?

Scratch

To have easier access to your home, and to—

(Enter Loveless and Martin.)

Loveless (returning)

My dear Lettice, I had forgotten to give you this ring, but I wish to—

(Scratch turns aside.)

Martin

Sir, if I'm not deceived, that's Scratch, dressed as a doctor.

Loveless

What the devil are you doing here in that outfit?

Scratch (gravely)

What do you want from me? Have you some secret illness? Speak, in the absence of Dr. Bloodgood, I can give

DOCTOR SCRATCH

you some good advice.

Loveless

No, rogue—we are not ill.

Scratch

Rogue!

Loveless

Yes, rogue.

Scratch

Non sum rogus. Medicus Sum. Medicus Sum.

Loveless

You—a doctor!

Scratch

Yes, doctor—and you are an impertinent. ABACA, LOSTVOI, BARITONAVII, PORLUTOM, Transconfusion.

If you were sane, I would speak to you about transconfusion and arterial. But, I can see what your problem is.

Go— take some pills.

Loveless

If I take a stick, I'll give you a terrible beating.

Lettice

Sir, come in and wait for our master inside. Leave these extravagants—.

Scratch (entering the house with Lettice)

You're right. That's a better idea.

(Exit Lettice and Scratch into the house.)

Martin

Sir, I question whether that's Scratch. 'Cause he speaks Latin.

Loveless

Rest assured, it's him—and I think there must be some trick up. I want to go in and find out what it is. (knocking at the door)

(Enter Lettice.)

Lettice

What do you want, sir? Do you want to quarrel with that honest man who is in our home?

Loveless

He's a cheating valet.

Lettice

That's untrue—he's one of our master's colleagues. And you have a bad grace to speak of him in that way. I will complain about all of this as soon as—

(Enter Dr. Bloodgood.)

Bloodgood (speaking offstage)

I tell you that this is not possible, and you entertain a wild opinion—

Loveless

Sir—

Bloodgood

You'd have to think a long time to imagine a thing so far from common sense.

Loveless

Sir, I wish—

Bloodgood

Without a doubt, that visionary idea comes from a man with a fever—a very hot fever.

Lettice

DOCTOR SCRATCH

What's the matter with you, sir, that you carry on this way with yourself?

Bloodgood

Some people have an opinion about transfusion which is so absurd, so—

Lettice

They're crazy—

Bloodgood

Without a doubt.

Loveless

They're not unreasonable, because it's been publicly condemned, you know.

(Enter Peg.)

Peg (to Lettice)

Dr. Bloodgood's here?

Lettice

There he is. Just in time.

Bloodgood

What do you want?

Peg

I want you hanged! You prescribed pills that almost killed me.

Bloodgood

Me?

Peg

You, you. Deceivers like you. You prescribe things that are wrong and not indicated. Go—take them, and see what happens to you. Pills for finding a lost dog!

Bloodgood

You're mistaken, I've never seen you.

Peg

Never! Didn't I just give you a silver crown?

Bloodgood

You're crazy.

Peg

You're lying and—

(Enter Big Tom.)

Tom

Ah, if I meet this Dr. Bloodgood, I am going to expose his racket—

Peg

Hold—there he is.

Tom

By God, sir, you must be a complete fool to prescribe pills to find out if a woman likes you. And, I was fool enough to take them. They almost sent me to the next world—and I haven't yet returned.

Bloodgood

You're both crazy to speak to me like that. I don't know you.

Tom

Didn't I just give you a golden crown?

Peg

He'll deny everything—just like he did with me.

Bloodgood

You should be put in Bedlam—both of you— You're mad.

Tom

Damn! You're lying—I am not crazy. Peace on this nonsense, or I will give you a taste of my stick on your ears.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Peg

And I—I will pull out your hair.

Bloodgood

This is too much to bear. Lettice, go find a constable.

Tom

Let her go, let her go. I will wait for him.

Peg

And me, too.

Tom

You see how these doctors kill people—and they're always so plausible. By Jove, I want my gold crown back.

Lettice

My word, if you don't be quiet, I am going for the constable.

Tom

That's what I want.

Peg

And that's what I'm waiting for.

(Enter Augusta and Scratch from the house.)

Scratch

But, madam—

Augusta

Once more, sir. I don't want my daughter speaking to men tete a tete. If you wish to see my husband, you can return when he's at home.

Scratch

Madam, can you believe that—

Augusta

I know what I believe. Once again—you can't come in when my husband is not home.

Peg (to Big Tom)

It seems to me that face strongly resembles that of the doctor who prescribed pills for me.

Tom

By Jove, it's the doctor who tried to kill me. Ah, deceiver—you will give me back my money.

Peg

Mine, too. (taking Scratch by the collar) Ah, rogue! I've got you now.

Scratch

Non sum rofus. Medicus Sum.

Bloodgood

Good people, you shouldn't maltreat a doctor like that—at least let him explain his reasons.

Loveless

He's the valet of my son.

Peg

He's the doctor who prescribed pills for us.

Tom

And who has given me an awful pain.

Loveless

Rogue! Reply to all these charges.

Scratch

Sir, I can't pretend anymore. Your son never left London, because of the love he had for Miss Olivia Bloodgood. She loves him passionately—and they love each other. And, they coerced me and several other people to serve them in their intrigues.

Augusta

My daughter loves your master?

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Scratch

Yes, madam, and powerfully.

Augusta

As for the son—perhaps—but, the father must never hope to marry Olivia.

Tom

But, why did you tell us to take pills? How could that advance the intrigues of your master?

Scratch

Those are matters which I will explain at another time.

Bloodgood

You see how you blamed me without cause? Be good enough to come back another time and I promise to satisfy you in one way or another.

Peg

I agree. But, don't fail.

Tom

I agree, too. But, no more pills, if you please.

Bloodgood

No. Good day.

(Exit Big Tom and Peg.)

Loveless

You say your master is deeply in love with Olivia?

Scratch

Yes, sir. And a hundred times more than I told you.

Loveless

Well—in that case, I can see I'll have to let him marry her— providing the mother and father consent also.

Bloodgood

For me—I wish it with all my heart—providing, of course, my wife wishes it.

Augusta

I don't really know if I should—

Bloodgood

But, wifey—

Augusta

Since you beg me, I will agree.

Loveless

Where's your master now?

Scratch

I see him coming. Just in time.

(Enter Gerald.)

Loveless

Welcome, gentleman from Oxford.

Gerald (hurling himself at his father's knees)

Ah, daddy—I ask your forgiveness.

Bloodgood

Hey, my God—let's leave this discussion. Let's go inside and talk it all over at leisure.

Augusta

Good idea. Come. Go in.

Bloodgood

Go in, Mr. Loveless. The honor is yours.

Loveless

As you please—let's go in.

DOCTOR SCRATCH

Scratch

Martin.

Martin

What do you want?

Scratch

Since all I did was crowned with success, by Jove, I'm going in, too.

They all enter the Doctor's house as

CURTAIN FALLS

FINIS