

PREGNANT WITH VIRTUE By T. Gueullete

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2002

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Etext by Dagny

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CHARACTERS

CASSANDRE

ISABELLE

GILLES

LEANDRE

THE DOCTOR

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ISABELLE: Certainly, my dear Gilles, you are all my hope.

GILLES: Hey! now look who's being nice! The devil take you, Miss, for having imagined stratagems in the pro and con of your love, the turnspit of my wit is worn out; girls think they are always prepared, and with them, you always have to start over again.

ISABELLE: But what do you want to become of me? Virtuous as I am, must I see myself dragged into a marriage where from all necessity my spouse must be a cuckold. You know, and are not unaware, how I hate the doctor and how much I love Leandre.

GILLES: Yes, but sonofabitch you must reward folks when you want them to put themselves in mud for you.

ISABELLE: What reward do you want me to give you? You know I've not so much as a farthing.

GILLES: A girl has always a coin with which she can pay off her debts, and can coin this money in secret without fear of being hanged.

ISABELLE: What! being the servant of my father you dare? Surely, Gilles, that's a joke on your part.

GILLES: Oh, well do what you choose; for with your Doctor and your Leandre, with the plague which chokes them, I don't know how to set up your snares.

ISABELLE: I don't see how I'm to decide. Tell me, should I have myself carried off by Leandre? Should I declare my father senile? or instead should I poison the Doctor?

GILLES: Wait, I'll find a good way to prevent them from declaring, I mean proposing, the Doctor to you: you have only to declare you are pregnant.

ISABELLE: Pregnant! I'm not, my dear Gilles; how do you expect I could appear so?

GILLES: Eh, by Jove; last year you were, and you made it so you didn't look it, you can make it now as if you were.

ISABELLE: Shut up, you insolent. Know that I don't like words with double entendres.

GILLES: Hey, by Jove, it's not lacking respect to you, but I'm not going to be put out of countenance because it annoys you.

ISABELLE: Although your speech may be impertinent, I find it very useful. All right, I'm determined to pass for pregnant, that will assuredly disgust the Doctor, but mustn't we warn Leandre that it's only a pleasant trick I'm employing so as to possess him?

GILLES: You must really be stupid, Miss, not to see that if he knows the secret he won't make grimaces with a sufficiently good grace, and he won't come to the support of the game of fatherhood of our love stratagem.

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Besides, as he is to be your husband, he must get used to the idea soon of thinking that his children are not his own.

ISABELLE: I am obliged to agree, Gilles, that nothing is so honest as all your arguments, and I submit to them without a backward glance henceforth. But for the swelling—tell me.

GILLES: Go, idiot, go, that's not a difficult thing to imagine! Withdraw, I see your father, I'm going to give him a story.

(EXIT ISABELLE.)

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(ENTER CASSANDRE.)

CASSANDRE: Heugh! Heugh!—Heugh!—Ouah! Doctor! (spits) Doctor! (he sneezes) Doctor! (he blows his nose) He really makes you wait.

GILLES: Fever's got you, Mr. Cassandre, I don't know anyone so sick, so dead looking, so like a screech-owl as you.

CASSANDRE: What do you mean?

GILLES: You must have been born under a malign planet. Before you were in the pillory, you did two years in prison, your first wife gave you horns, your second made you a cuckold, you've got the face of a monkey, you look like a scorpion, you're stupid as a pig, your daughter last year was brought to deliver publicly, and here she is pregnant again today.

CASSANDRE: Pregnant!

GILLES: Yes, truly. I'm coming to prepare your mind for it—if you have any.

CASSANDRE: And do you know if it's a boy or a girl?

GILLES: Plague on the jade! Is that my concern?

CASSANDRE: And tell me by whom did she become pregnant? Is it by one of my friends?

GILLES: No, but it has the appearance of being one of hers. All your friends are old skeletons ready to fall in a ditch.

CASSANDRE: Is it my notary?

GILLES: Right! He can't impregnate any more.

CASSANDRE: Is it my solicitor?

GILLES: He can't produce any more.

CASSANDRE: Is it my attorney?

GILLES: He doesn't do settlements any more.

CASSANDRE: Is it my usher?

GILLES: He doesn't cultivate any more.

CASSANDRE: Is it my draper?

GILLES: He doesn't show off his wares any more.

CASSANDRE: Is it my tailor?

GILLES: He doesn't do that sort of needlework.

CASSANDRE: He doesn't do needlework, he doesn't produce, he doesn't impregnate any more. Here, scoundrel, take that for your negatives! (he beats him)

GILLES: Yes, oh! Mr. Cassandre, I am not ungrateful to such a degree. I am going, in a terrible way, to give it back to you in your belly.

CASSANDRE: What, wretch, you dare to strike your master whose bread you eat! ah—ah, ah, ah, ah.

GILLES: Yes, Mr. Cassandre, you needed that little adjustment .

(They fight and fall on the ground.)

GILLES: Now, there you are, on the ground, Mr. Cassandre.

CASSANDRE: Ah! I am completely out of joint.

GILLES: And me too. Do you need a little cudgeling?

CASSANDRE: What's that you say now, gallows bird?

GILLES: Wait, don't you have a nasty cold in your nose?

CASSANDRE: Yes, rogue, I've got a nasty nose cold.

GILLES: You need to keep it as warm as possible. Come closer, come closer. (he shows him his ass)

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CASSANDRE: Get out of here, wretch, if you don't want me to slaughter you. But here comes my daughter, I have to reprimand her.

GILLES: And as for me, I'm going to go drink a pint and eat a slice of sirloin. Goodbye, Mr. Cassandre.
(EXIT GILLES.)

ISABELLE: (entering) Boo hoo, boo hoo, boo hoo, I can't stand it any more.

CASSANDRE: Show yourself, beautiful, show yourself. Eh, what's going on? You're pregnant again?

ISABELLE: (curtsying) Yes, father.

CASSANDRE: Why, these manners don't suit me: eh, what the devil, don't you know how to amuse yourself some other way?

ISABELLE: Father, it's impossible for me.

CASSANDRE: I don't say not to take a pastime once in a while.

ISABELLE: Ah! Don't pester me, I beg you.

CASSANDRE: But it's a question of proper conduct.

ISABELLE: It really is a question of wise behaviour. It's a wise woman I have to deal with.

CASSANDRE: I don't know how the doctor will take the thing.

ISABELLE: He can take it any way he wants to.

CASSANDRE: Luckily, he's near-sighted.

ISABELLE: In that case he really might not notice it.

CASSANDRE: But, tell me, my sweet, whose child is it?

ISABELLE: Ah, father! you know how virtuous I am! Don't demand such a confession on my part; I'm afraid of accusing someone who might not be guilty.

CASSANDRE: I've always recognized good principles in you. But I notice the doctor.

GILLES: (entering playing horse on the shoulders of the doctor) Hya! Hya! Giddyup! This man has a belly so stuffed with science that he cannot take a step; I had to lead him here myself.

CASSANDRE: Come closer, Lord Doctor, and come kiss my daughter.

DOCTOR: Willingly.

(The doctor has a very big belly. He collides with Isabelle who has a big belly and they bounce off each other and cannot hug.)

DOCTOR: Whew! Old Man Cassandre, they say that two mountains cannot meet, but it seems to me that's not always true.

CASSANDRE: Always proverbs! O clever man, clever man.

GILLES: Come on, now's the moment for the stratagem.

(Isabelle makes faces.)

DOCTOR: Yes, I am very clever, but—

CASSANDRE: Hey, well, today's the day you must marry my daughter.

DOCTOR: Yes, but—

CASSANDRE: She's got very sprightly eyes.

DOCTOR: Yes, but—

CASSANDRE: We are really going to divert ourselves at the wedding.

DOCTOR: Yes, but—

CASSANDRE: Yes. But—Yes. But! What's that mean? You know quite well that on these occasions one mustn't recoil.

DOCTOR: No, but—

CASSANDRE: All the preparations are made; the fruits have been ready for over a week.

DOCTOR: By all the devils, it's been more than eight months, so that the pear is ripe to fall.

CASSANDRE: What? Is it because you notice that my daughter is pregnant that you would like to break it off?

DOCTOR: No, but—

CASSANDRE: I'd really like to see you insult me like that.

DOCTOR: Listen. I made you a promise, your daughter made me a fat baby, let's back out.

CASSANDRE: Go, you are a moron.

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DOCTOR: All vain, grasping, lousy, old pimp!

GILLES: Eh! stop it! Here are two young kids who are going to cut each other's throats.

(Gilles pretending to separate them gives them blows with a whip . Everybody, including Isabelle, fights.)

GILLES: (shouting) Keep a look out! A cop! A midwife! I am pregnant!

CASSANDRE: Why, let's control ourselves, I notice Leandre.

GILLES: Silence, silence. (speaking in Latin) Contecueses omnes.

LEANDRE: (entering) No, by Jove, it won't be said that I will be the Turkey, and I see plainly that there's no other role for me to take than to take my sword in my hand.

GILLES: Huh, what's this?

(The same racket starts over with the same shouts. Gilles overturns a keg of flour on the doctor, after which everyone bows to him.)

LEANDRE (To Isabelle) Don't doubt my respect, charming Isabelle, but what I am learning is very extraordinary. I leave Le Havre, where I assuredly spent several nice days, I come with fish and game wardens on my ass; as soon as I set foot on land, on to Paris, I got behind a coach, so as to arrive sooner; you know besides, my devotion is very inconvenient to me, and despite these obstacles which are sent me by the goddess Fortune, I learn as I arrive, that today is the day that must light the torches of your union with the doctor.

DOCTOR: Oh! I tell you—

GILLES: Peace.

GILLES: Shut up, cod–fish tail.

DOCTOR: I have—

GILLES: Shit up your nose.

ISABELLE:: My dear Leandre, your return has certainly much to charm me, you can be sure that you are the only one of my lovers with whom I wish to gamble on marriage, and I know quite well your penchant for staying so long in the provinces has only enflamed your love for me .

LEANDRE: Ah, let me embrace your knees, one hundred and one hundred times. But what's this I perceive?

ISABELLE: Don't be astonished: it's only a draft which slipped into the space between my bed and the wall, which caused me to swell up as you see.

LEANDRE: Miz, those are sorry excuses; think that it's ten months since I left for the coast, and that since that time I've neither seen nor fingered you.

ISABELLE: Well, I have to confess that it's a misfortune that's come to me, I don't know how.

LEANDRE: That's no big thing, charming Isabelle; I know the manners that a gentleman must have, and I regard you as my wife, there's nothing to prevent our marriage.

CASSANDRE: Ah, how ravished I am with the joy you cause me. Come, since the doctor no longer wishes to marry my daughter, I give her to you.

GILLES: Nice compliment! Ah! the swine!

DOCTOR: Willingly.

LEANDRE: But I take an oath on the hilt of my sword, and on the lock of hair you gave me when you granted me the favor at The Play in the Hay Tavern, of not sleeping between sheets until I have accomplished two things.

ISABELLE: What's that?

LEANDRE: First, charming Isabelle, is that since you are pregnant, your father will never die—except at my hand.

CASSANDRE: What do you mean?

LEANDRE: If you had put her in time in the Hospital, I would not ever have had the trouble I'm having today. The lamb is not guilty when it is eaten by the wolf. It's not the fault of the apricot when it is marked by the bites of unjust hornets, and when the child wants to go dew–dew, it's the fault of its mother if it ends up having diarrhea in its pants.

GILLES: That's reasonable.

DOCTOR: That's reasonable.

GILLES: (to Cassandre) Come on, prepare to buy the ranch.

CASSANDRE: (to Gilles) Rogue.

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ISABELLE: (to Leandre) Ah, how you alarm me! And what is the other thing, my dear Leandre?

LEANDRE: Cruel Isabelle, it's to die myself, in person, before you right now.

ISABELLE: (weeping) Ha! (they all weep) Go, ingrate, go! I wasn't pregnant as you see.

LEANDRE: What are you saying?

ISABELLE: Here, perfidious one, that's all I have to say. (an earthenware pot falls from underneath Isabelle and breaks)

LEANDRE: Ah, what do I see? What luck! Too clever trick. Pot which gives me life as it perishes, fragments which deserve to be bordered with gold all around, don't doubt the esteem and the gratitude that I will have for you eternally.

GILLES: He really wants that pot, but as for me, I'd prefer a tureen of beef stew.

COUPLETS

CASSANDRE: Love, come down to help me,

Deign to listen to me.

Revive the youth

Of Mr. Nice-guy, Cassandre.

While marrying my daughter,

Don't refuse me,

Use your crutch

Like a spade.

GILLES: Pretty masculine maskers,

And beautiful female maskers,

Take pleasure without end;

Be ardently faithful:

If you believe Gilles,

You must, this Mardi-Gras,

Use your crutch

Like a spade.

CURTAIN