

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock

Table of Contents

<u>THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE</u>	1
<u>Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock</u>	2

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Etext by Dagny

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CHARACTERS:

FRISTON, an enchanter
PIERROT, his valet
LEANDRE
ISABELLE
OLIVETTE, her maid
HARLEQUIN, Leandre's valet
A TROUPE OF GOBLINS

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The action takes place on Friston's enchanted island.

The stage represents an island decorated by the power of the enchanter, Friston.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

FRISTON: Ho, there, Pierrot!
You, who only came to this island today,
Tell me — does the abode seem beautiful?

PIERROT: Very beautiful.

FRISTON: I am the enchanter, Friston.
I begged you for my service, and as
I want to make a pretty lad of you,
I will instruct you in magic.
I will teach you the terrible science
Of dark secrets that make the day go pale.

PIERROT: Instead, why not teach me,
If it's possible,
The art of avoiding love's darts.

FRISTON: What! Pierrot's afraid of becoming amorous?

PIERROT: Oh! my word,
That's an affair already determined.
As you made me cleave the air with you,
I saw, passing through this garden,
A brunette —
What a fine bearing!
How beautiful she seemed to me!

FRISTON: Well?

PIERROT: Well, I feel for her —
You understand me perfectly —

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FRISTON: The person who concerns you, my friend,
Is named Olivette.
She belongs to the beauty that I love,
She's the maid of Isabelle.

PIERROT: Fine, fine. So much the better.
Since she's your mistress's chambermaid,
She's rightfully mine.

FRISTON: No question.

PIERROT: Hey, if you please,
What are these poor creatures
Doing in this deserted island?

FRISTON: On that subject,
I have a confidence to make to you.

PIERROT: I am disposed to give you an audience.

FRISTON: Borne on an invisible chariot,
I passed through Florence one day.

PIERROT: (interrupting him) It's a beautiful city,
That Florence. Continue.

FRISTON: My heart, long at peace,
No longer thought of finding love.

PIERROT: Oh, damn!
Cupid's a little wise-guy who intrudes everywhere.

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FRISTON: Allow me to speak if you will.

PIERROT: Continue, sir, continue.

FRISTON: I observed the lovable Isabelle.
She was dreaming on a green lawn.
As soon as I was there for her —

PIERROT: (sings) Love troubled your reason?
(speaking) Isn't it so? You became amorous, all at once, like me?

FRISTON: Are you always going to interrupt me?
(singing) Far from rushing, like a passionate lover,
To declare my flames right away,
I wanted to know the depth
Of the sentiments in the beauty's heart.
I discovered that a faithful cavalier
Occupied her softest moments.

PIERROT: Nice discovery, my word!

FRISTON: Again?

PIERROT: Continue, Mr. Enchanter, continue.

FRISTON: And you, Mr. Pierrot, quit it.
You begin to make me impatient.
(singing) I decided to ravish Isabelle
From this rival who reigned in her heart.

PIERROT: (sings) A poor lover is soon on the wing,
When for a rival he finds an enchanter.

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FRISTON: You don't intend to shut up, chatter-box?

PIERROT: Go on, sir, I won't say anything more.

FRISTON: Quickly, I formed a cloud.
I surrounded the lovers
And to this peaceful island
I transported them in a moment.

PIERROT: I guess indeed what you've done to the girl,
But what's become of the lad?

FRISTON: In a magnificent palace,
Which I made expressly for them,
My magic art ceaselessly
Teaches them a thousand games.

FRISTON: (aside) Right. I think he's mad.

FRISTON: These lovers are always together,
With spirits devoted to me
That around them my order musters,
Making them observe this law.

PIERROT: What, it's you who ordered
That they always be together?

FRISTON: Assuredly.

PIERROT: My mother was quite obliging.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

Sir, you are even more so.

FRISTON: Ignoramus!

(Singing) Learn that love deserts a heart
As soon as it sees itself at peace;
So, to make happiness distasteful,
It only has to be made easy.

PIERROT: My word, let's sing. The more I will drink,
The more you will see me impaired.

FRISTON: (laughing) Hey, dummy.

PIERROT: (laughing, too) Hey, dupe!
(sings) By Jove!
You are really telling me a tall tale!
If —

FRISTON: After two months, my rival
Must be really tired of Isabelle.

PIERROT: Is your rival French?

FRISTON: No. He's an Italian,
But even if he were a Spaniard,
He couldn't resist it.

PIERROT: And tell me, sir,
Does Olivette also have a lover?

FRISTON: Yes. Harlequin, Leandre's valet, is with her here.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

PIERROT: And they are together at all moments?

FRISTON: Like their masters.

PIERROT: Come on. All we'll get are the leftovers.

FRISTON: Ah! Judge better of Isabelle and Olivette!
They are virtuous.

PIERROT: Still, that's no fault of yours.

FRISTON: Go. I guarantee you the master and
The valet are disgusted with their mistresses.
I tell you the remedy is infallible.
(singing) Yes, I protest
This remedy will work.

PIERROT: Oh! I see the rest,
The success it will have.

FRISTON: It's already working.
I notice Leandre and Harlequin are
Separating a bit from their beauties.
(striking Pierrot with his ring)
Let's be invisible to hear what they are saying.

HARLEQUIN: (entering) Lovers who you pity,
You are too happy.

LEANDRE: Hey, about what, my friend,
Would you pity yourself?

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

HARLEQUIN: About what?
To always see Olivette,
And to see her without any one
To be found to tell about it.
I'd just as well like to be her husband.

LEANDRE: There's nothing in this likable retreat,
That doesn't poison your fate.
Exquisite wines and admirable cheer.

HARLEQUIN: Oh! without it I would die!

LEANDRE: All pleasures are gathered for us here
Where can you find finer concerts?

HARLEQUIN: Yes, but, sir,
Our games always resemble
Certain recent operas.
(speaking) There's nobody here.
You compose the box, Isabelle and you.
Olivette the balcony, me, the pit: Brilliant assembly!

LEANDRE: What do you want?
We have succumbed to the power of an enchanter.

HARLEQUIN: To the devil with dull enchanters,
Him, his island and all his goblins.
He joins
Lovers like rabbits
In this calm abode,
We yawn, we get bored, we fall asleep.

LEANDRE: I know that only too well.

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HARLEQUIN: There's no pleasure in quietly possessing a heart:

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Long live complications!
What joy to have to force the trenches of a stern mother,
To win the road blocked by an interesting maid servant,
Or to take the impossible from a jealous husband!

LEANDRE: It's only too true.

HARLEQUIN: I regret the time Olivette's aunt
Made me enraged by her vigilance.

LEANDRE: I wish Isabelle's tutor was crossing my amorous plans.
I must confess, Harlequin, my untroubled happiness begins to tire me.

HARLEQUIN: There's no way of getting out of it, sir.

LEANDRE: I notice Isabelle and Olivette in this alley.
Let's avoid them.

HARLEQUIN: Yes. We'll procure ourselves that pleasure.

LEANDRE: What pain to love without constraint.
To be able to form your vows without fear.

HARLEQUIN: No. Without the rigors and the alarms,
Love's pleasure have no charms.

(Leandre and Harlequin withdraw.)

FRISTON: Well, this business
Is on its way, Pierrot.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

PIERROT: Your thesis is plain,
I'm just a dummy.
From now on I hope
To be welcomed here

FRISTON: We must also learn
The feelings of our beauties.
(sighing)
Alas, perhaps they're
More faithful to their lovers.
(speaking) Still, that wouldn't be natural. They're approaching.
Let's listen to them.

(Isabelle appears sad. Olivette dances and wants to get her mistress
to dance as well.)

OLIVETTE: (dragging Isabelle)
Let's dance the new cotillion.
Bestir yourself, beauty,
Bestir yourself, then.

ISABELLE: Leave me alone. What extravagance!
Why these transports and this excitement?

OLIVETTE: Stop being uneasy.
In this happy moment,
Imitate Olivette,
And let's dance together.
Let's be gay,
With a gay air.

ISABELLE: Olivette, quit it. Joy bores me.

OLIVETTE: Joy bores you! Go rejoin Leandre.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

(singing) Eh, leave me alone, cruel woman,
To play in this garden
Oh the novel sweetness
To be without Harlequin.
Let's be gay
With a gay air.
(speaking) We were walking all together in the same alley the first
day.

ISABELLE: Yes.

OLIVETTE: We love to walk separately at this time.

ISABELLE: It is true. What a change, my dear Olivette!
The first days, I pardon to the enchanter for having kidnapped me.

OLIVETTE: And me, too. I even laughed when I thought of the manner
Which he employed with us to detach us from our lovers.

ISABELLE: We regarded him like a madman.

OLIVETTE: Hey, the old rogue! How well he knew women.

ISABELLE: Oh, that I were still under the strict empire of my tutor.

OLIVETTE: Oh, why am I not still scolded and insulted by my aunt!
Ah! my aunt!
Ah! my aunt!
When I fumed against you
I was only an ignoramus!
Ah, my aunt!
Ah, my aunt!

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

ISABELLE: What would Harlequin say if he heard you?
(singing) Alas! If this faithful lover
Were instructed in his misfortune
He would go hang himself with sorrow!

OLIVETTE: I will pay for the rope.

ISABELLE: You are really generous! As for me, I apprehend that
Leandre is noticing my change; I know him, he'll die of it.

PIERROT: (low to Friston) Make me visible, and I am going to
Announce to them the new feast you intend to give them.

(Friston gives him a tap with his ring and withdraws. Pierrot heads
towards Olivette dancing and singing aside.)

PIERROT: Holding my dignity,
Let's go to these children,
These wenches, my word,
Are tempting enough.
And bing, bang bing,
Lisa, the Soubrette,
And boom, bam, boom,
Lisette, Lison.

OLIVETTE: Oh, oh. Now there's the most funny of all
The disguised spirits we've seen up to now.

PIERROT: (aside, making himself agreeable) They are ogling me.
(dancing and singing)
And bing, bang, bing.
Lisette the Soubrette
And bing, bam, boom
Lisette the Lison.
(speaking)
Let's pay them a well turned compliment. (bows to them)
Ladies. I kiss your hands. Milord the enchanter,

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

My master, wants to regale you. (singing)
Prepare yourself for the latest party.

ISABELLE: (with a sad air) What? Yet another party!

OLIVETTE: (yawning) Yet another party!—

PIERROT: Yes, yet another party. You aren't there!
(singing) The enchanter who brought you
Prepared for you a hundred years.
You and your lovers will be
Always together during this time.
The enchanter who brought you
Prepared for you a hundred years.

OLIVETTE: May the devil take him with his parties!

PIERROT: Oh! This is going to be fun!
(singing)
The song about it will be magnificent.

OLIVETTE: What, your eternal music
Intends through its afflicting air
To eternalise our migraines?
The opera gives quarter to folks
At least three times a week.

PIERROT: Through a new enchantment,
Made expressly to please you,
You are going to see in a bowl
Some bourgeois of Cythera.
Of their concerts I hear the sound
The fol der rol,
The fol der rol.
(to Olivette, pointing to Harlequin who approaches)
And there comes your cherished lover.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

OLIVETTE: Biribiri,
In the fashion of Barbary,
Mon ami.

(Leandre and Harlequin arrive. They don't have the disconcerted air of their mistresses.)

LEANDRE: (low to Harlequin) Isabelle has penetrated my inconstancy. She appears overwhelmed with sorrow.

HARLEQUIN: (low to Leandre) Olivette is pouting, too.

ISABELLE: (low to Olivette) Leandre's observing my change. His despair is bursting out.

OLIVETTE: (low to Isabelle) Harlequin is reading
In the depths of my heart.

PIERROT: I believe that you respect me;
It seems to me you constrain yourself.
Let's go, children, prattle,
Always sit together.
Now that you have everything,
They'd take you for married couples.

(He makes Leandre sit by Isabelle on a bench, and Harlequin with Olivette on another. The four lovers perform a lazzi and imperceptibly distance themselves from each other, and give off signs of boredom. Hardly have they been seated when a vessel appears with goblins disguised as cupid who descend to the tunes of different instruments. They are accompanied by other spirits in the form of inhabitants of Cythera.)

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

AN INHABITANT OF CYTHERA: Fie on the most beautiful chain,
If one is choked too much by it.
You've got to become unfaithful,
Love demands liberty.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS: Fie on the most beautiful chain,
If one is choked too much by it.
You've got to become unfaithful,
Love demands liberty.

(The spirits form a dance after which they sing the following.)

AN INHABITANT OF CYTHERA: The lover pressed by a too warm flame
Thinks that perfect happiness
Is always to see his mistress.
With nothing troubling his ardor,
That's the error of a youthful spirit;
In Cythera they laugh at it.

CHORUS: That's the error of a youthful spirit.
In Cythera they laugh at it.

A FEMALE INHABITANT OF CYTHERA: With a young girl, the aged mother
Believes by making the guard tight
To prevent her going to Cythera
After the voyage has already been made.
That's the error of an aged spirit;
In Cythera they laugh at it.

CHORUS: That's the error of an aged spirit;
In Cythera they laugh at it.

PIERROT: The husband who now sees

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

A were-wolf in his wife,
Counts on her diabolic virtue
Although he doesn't make a penny.
He's nonetheless a cuckold;
In Cythera they laugh at him.

(After they sing these songs the actors leave, except for Pierrot and the lovers.)

HARLEQUIN: A dumb brunette,
Who smiles at any old thing,
Thinks every smirk of hers
Is pretty as can be.
In her bedroom they applaud it,
On the stairway they laugh at it.

OLIVETTE: (rising and looking at Harlequin with a disdainful air)
The most tiresome darkie,
Always ready to make a bad joke,
Thinks to divert with his sallies
A woman he's causing to yawn.
With a look they applaud him,
Behind the fan she laughs at him.

HARLEQUIN: (to Olivette) I don't know this darkie.

OLIVETTE: And the dumb brunette, do you know her, Mr. Turk?
(Sings) Now there's my jesting booby. (repeat)

HARLEQUIN: So then I'm a darkie? (repeat)
Ah! You're looking for a fight!
If I displease you, beauty,
Let's break up.

OLIVETTE: Let's break up.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

HARLEQUIN: Shake!

OLIVETTE: And bake!

TOGETHER: Let's break up.

HARLEQUIN: I am light as a balloon.

OLIVETTE: As for me, I'm like a feather.

LEANDRE: (rising and laughing) Ah! by Jove, how crazy Olivette is!

ISABELLE: (rising in wrath) Harlequin is insolent!

(Leandre strikes Olivette on the shoulder, who performs a lazzi of hunting a bird, saying—)

OLIVETTE: Chou, chou.

LEANDRE: What are you doing?

OLIVETTE: (singing) It's my poor love flying away.

HARLEQUIN: Mine wasn't so slow.

ISABELLE: (to Leandre, who laughs)

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

What, you're laughing at this idle talk,
You support this inconstant!

HARLEQUIN: (aside) Beauty, he guards you too much.
Goodbye, all good things come to an end.

LEANDRE: (affecting scorn) I can see, flighty Isabelle,
You want to break a sweet chain.

OLIVETTE: (to Leandre) Sir, do you count for nothing
Being faithful for two months?

ISABELLE: Ah! It is over! I must avenge myself!
Perfidious lover, my flames are outraged.
To reproach me, for no reason, that I'm changeable,
Alas, that tells me too plainly, you are changing.

HARLEQUIN (looking maliciously at Olivette and taking a sad tone)
Already, from this change,
Regrets cling to us.

OLIVETTE: (reciprocating) Assuredly, we are going
To die at this moment
(in a sneering tone) Go see if they're coming, Jack.

HARLEQUIN: (imitating her) Go see if they're coming.

(Friston appears.)

FRISTON: What's all this brouhaha?

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OLIVETTE: (with emotion) Don't come to reconcile us.

FRISTON: What's it all about?

HARLEQUIN: No, I beg you.
Plague! You know better than that.

LEANDRE: (to Friston) Mercy, release me from these chains.

ISABELLE: Let me leave this island.

OLIVETTE: (pointing to Leandre and Harlequin)
Far from these odious objects,
Place us in some town.

HARLEQUIN: (pointing to Isabelle and Olivette)
So as not to see these she–monkeys any more,
I'm ready to go to Canada.

FRISTON: You must give Isabelle to me.

LEANDRE: I consent to it; be her spouse.

PIERROT: (to Harlequin, pointing to Olivette)
And you, renounce this beauty.

HARLEQUIN: Oh! Willingly, she is yours.

PIERROT: This fine kid knows how to touch my soul.

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HARLEQUIN: What do I care? Love her.

PIERROT: At dawn I intend to make her my wife.

HARLEQUIN: Would she were already!

PIERROT: I am charmed by his gracious affectations.

HARLEQUIN: I've had it up to here,
As for me,
I've had it up to here.

FRISTON: (to Isabelle) And you, without reluctance
Are you leaving your lover?
You keep silent.

OLIVETTE: So as to be blunt about it,
Provide us a way,
To leave instantly.
And above all, whatever it costs,
We will pay you cash.

PIERROT: Right, right. The cow is ours.
(to Olivette) My pretty, would you
Marry Pierrot?

OLIVETTE I take you in a heart beat.

PIERROT: (offering his hand) Put it there, my sweet.

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OLIVETTE: Yes, to get out of this hell house,
I'd marry the devil.
Yo-ho,
I'd marry the devil.

PIERROT: I ask of you the mark of preference.

OLIVETTE: Oh! You deserve it completely!

ISABELLE: (to Friston) Lord, I give you my hand,
Rescue me from slavery.

OLIVETTE: I would like to be,
Tomorrow, sweetly married.
(speaking) But, gentlemen, it's a condition
That you don't keep us shut in with you.
That would be even worse.

FRISTON: No. You will be mistresses of your actions.

PIERROT: As soon as you will be our wives,
You will become two great ladies.
We will see you very rarely.
You will have gallants galore.

OLIVETTE: The role truly flatters us.
We will know how to defend ourselves.

LEANDRE: (to Friston) Mercy, Mr. Enchanter,
Let's get this over with.

THE SCHOOL FOR LOVERS By ALAIN-RENE LE SAGE

FRISTON: It couldn't go better,
Let's end the adventure.

ISABELLE We are leaving these parts forever.

LEANDRE: Make it a double size carriage.

HARLEQUIN: Distance us from our Cloris,
Whose weight is killing us.
And transport us to Paris.

OLIVETTE: In that case, take us to Rome.

CURTAIN