

The Miser

Moliere

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(*L'av Are*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Harpagon, *father to Cléante and Elise, in love with Mariane.*

Cléante, Harpagon's *son, Mariane's lover.*

Valère, *son of Anselme, Elise's lover.*

Anselme, *father to Valère and Mariane.*

Master Simon, *agent.*

Master Jacques, *cook and coachman to Harpagon.*

La flèche, Cléante's *valet.*

Brindavoine Harpagon's *lacqueys.*

La Merluche Harpagon's *lacqueys.*

A Magistrate *and his Clerk.*

Elise, Harpagon's *daughter, Valère's sweetheart.*

Mariane, Cléante's *sweetheart, beloved by Harpagon.*

Frosine, *a designing woman.*

Mistress Claude, Harpagon's *servant.*

The scene is in Paris, in Harpagon's House.

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ACT I

Scene I.—Valère, Elise.

Valère. Eh, what! charming Elise, you are growing melancholy, after the kind assurances which you were good enough to give me of your love! Alas! I see you sighing in the midst of my joy! Tell me, is it with regret at having made me happy? And do you repent of that engagement to which my affection has induced you?

Elise. No, Valère, I cannot repent of anything that I do for you. I feel myself attracted to it by too sweet a power, and I have not even the will to wish that things were otherwise. But, to tell you the truth, our success causes me uneasiness; and I am very much afraid of loving you a little more than I ought.

Valère. Eh! what is there to fear, Elise, in the affection you have for me?

Elise. Alas! a hundred things at once: the anger of a father, the reproaches of my family, the censure of the world; but more than all, Valère, the change of your heart, and that criminal coolness with which those of your sex most frequently repay the too ardent proofs of an innocent love.

Valère. Ah! do not wrong me thus, to judge of me by others! Suspect me of anything, Elise, rather than of failing in my duty to you. I love you too well for that: and my affection for you will last as long as my life.

Elise. Ah, Valère, every one talks in the same strain! All men are alike in their words; their actions only show them to be different.

Valère. Since actions only can show what we are, wait then, at least, to judge of my heart by them; and do not search for crimes because you unjustly fear, and wrongly anticipate. Pray do not kill me with the poignant blows of an outrageous suspicion; and give me time to convince you, by many thousand proofs, of the sincerity of my affection.

Elise. Alas, how easily we are persuaded by those we love! Yes, Valère, I hold your heart incapable of deceiving me. I believe that you truly love me, and that you will be constant. I will no longer doubt of it, and I will confine my grief to the apprehensions of the blame which people may utter against me.

Valère. But why this uneasiness?

Elise. I should have nothing to fear, if every one could see you with the eyes with which I look upon you; and in your own person I see sufficient to justify me in what I do for you. For its defence, my heart pleads all your merits, supported by the help of a gratitude with which Heaven has bound me to you. At every moment I call to mind that supreme danger which first made us acquainted with each other; that wonderful generosity which made you risk your life in order to snatch mine from the fury of the waves; those most tender attentions which you lavished upon me, after having dragged me out of the water, and the assiduous homage of that ardent affection, which neither time nor obstacles have been able to discourage, and which, causing you to neglect relatives and country, detains you in this spot, and keeps your position unrecognized all on my account, and has reduced you to assume the functions of servant to my father, in order to see me. All this produces, no doubt, a marvellous effect on me, and quite sufficient to justify, in my own eyes, the engagement to which I have consented; but it is not perhaps enough to justify it in that of others, and I am not certain that the world will enter into my sentiments.

Valère. Of all that you have mentioned, it is only by my love that I pretended to deserve anything from you; and as for the scruples which you have; your father himself takes but too good care to justify you before the world; and the excess of his avarice, and the austere way in which he treats his children, might authorize stranger things still. Pardon me, charming Elise, for speaking thus before you. You know that, on that subject, no good can be said. But in short, if I can, as I hope I shall, find my relatives again, we shall have very little difficulty in rendering them favourable to us. I am impatient to receive some tidings of them; and should they be delayed much longer, I will myself go in search of them.

Elise. Ah! Valère, do not stir from this, I beseech you; and think only how to ingratiate yourself with my father.

Valère. You see how I go about it, and the artful wheedling which I have been obliged to make use of to enter his service; beneath what mask of sympathy and affinity of sentiments I disguise myself, in order to please him; and what part I daily play with him, that I may gain his affection. I am making admirable progress in it; and

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experience teaches me that to find favour with men, there is no better method than to invest ourselves in their eyes with their hobbies; than to act according to their maxims, to flatter their faults and to applaud their doings. One needs not fear to overdo this complaisance; the way in which one fools them may be as palpable as possible; even the sharpest are the greatest dupes when flattery is in the question; and there is nothing too impertinent or too ridiculous for them to swallow, if it be only seasoned with praises. Sincerity suffers somewhat by the trade which I follow; but, when we have need of people, we must suit ourselves to their tastes; and since they are to be gained over only in that way, it is not the fault of those who flatter, but of those who wish to be flattered.

Elise. But why do you not try to gain the support of my brother, in case the servant should take it into her head to reveal our secret?

Valère. There is no managing them both at once; and the disposition of the father and that of the son are so opposed to each other, that it becomes difficult to arrange a confidence with both. But you, on your part, act upon your brother, and make use of the affection between you two, to bring him over to our interests. He is just coming. I go. Take this opportunity of speaking to him, and reveal our business to him, only when you judge the fit time come.

Elise. I do not know whether I shall have the courage to entrust this confidence to him.

Scene II.—Cléante, Elise.

Cléante. I am very glad to find you alone, sister; I was dying to speak to you, to unburden myself to you of a secret.

Elise. You find me quite ready to listen, brother. What have you to tell me?

Cléante. Many things, sister, all contained in one word. I am in love.

Elise. You are in love?

Cléante. Yes, I am in love. But before going farther, I know that I am dependent on my father, and that the name of son subjects me to his will; that we ought not to pledge our affection without the consent of those to whom we owe our life; that Heaven has made them the masters of our affection, and that we are enjoined not to dispose of it but by their direction; that, not being biassed by any foolish passion, they are less likely to deceive themselves than we are, and to see much better what is proper for us; that we ought rather to be guided by the light of their prudence than by the blindness of our passion; and that the ardour of our youth often drags us to dangerous precipices. I tell you all this, sister, that you may save yourself the trouble of telling it to me; for, frankly, my love will not listen to anything, and I pray you not to make any remonstrances.

Elise. Have you pledged yourself, brother, with her whom you love?

Cléante. No; but I am determined to do so, and I implore you, once more, not to advance any reasons to dissuade me from it.

Elise. Am I then so strange a person, brother?

Cléante. No, sister; but you are not in love; you are ignorant of the sweet empire which a tender passion exercises over our hearts; and I dread your wisdom.

Elise. Alas! dear brother, let us not speak of my wisdom; there is no one who does not fail in it, at least once in his life; and were I to open my heart to you, perhaps I would appear less wise in your eyes than yourself.

Cléante. Ah! would to Heaven that your heart, like mine —

Elise. Let us first finish your affair, and tell me who it is whom you love.

Cléante. A young person, who has lately come to live in this neighbourhood, and who seems to be made to inspire love in all who behold her. Nature, sister, has created nothing more amiable; and I felt myself carried away the moment I saw her. Her name is Mariane, and she lives under the protection of a good motherly woman who is nearly always ill, and for whom this dear girl entertains feelings of friendship not to be imagined. She waits upon her, condoles with her, and cheers her with a tenderness that would touch you to the very soul. She does things with the most charming air in the world; a thousand graces shine through her every action, a gentleness full of attraction, a most prepossessing kindness, an adorable simplicity, a — Ah! sister, I wish you could have seen her!

Elise. I see much, brother, in the things you tell me; and to understand what she really is, it is sufficient that you love her.

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Cléante. I have learned, secretly, that they are not too well off; and that even their careful way of living has some difficulty in making both ends meet with the small means at their command. Imagine, dear sister, the pleasure it must be to improve the condition of her whom we love; to convey, delicately, some small assistance to the modest wants of a virtuous family; and then conceive how annoying it is to me to find myself, through the avarice of a father, powerless to taste that joy, and to be unable to show this fair one any proof of my love.

Elise. Yes, I can conceive well enough, brother, what must be your grief.

Cléante. No, sister, it is greater than you can believe. For, in short, can anything be more cruel than this rigorous meanness that is exercised over us, this strange niggardliness in which we are made to languish? What good will it do us to have means, when we shall no longer be of an age to enjoy them, and if, to maintain myself, I am now obliged to run in debt on all sides; if I, as well as you, am obliged to crave daily the aid of tradesmen in order to wear decent clothes? In short, I wished to speak to you to help me to sound my father upon my present feelings; and should I find him opposed to them, I am resolved to go elsewhere, with this dear girl, to enjoy whatever fortune providence may have in store for us. I have endeavoured to raise money everywhere for this purpose, and if your affairs, sister, are similar to mine, and if our father runs counter to our wishes, we shall both leave him, and emancipate ourselves from that tyranny in which his insupportable avarice has so long held us.

Elise. It is true enough that every day he gives us more cause to regret the death of our mother, and that —

Cléante. I hear his voice; let us go a little farther to finish our confidences; and afterwards we will join our forces to attack the ruggedness of his temper.

Scene III.—Harpagon, La Flèche.

Harpagon. Clear out of this immediately, and let me have no reply! Get out of my house, you consummate cheat, you veritable gallow's bird!

La Flèche (aside). I have never seen anything more vicious than this cursed old man; and I really think—I speak under correction—that he has got the devil in him.

Harpagon. You are muttering between your teeth!

La Flèche. Why are you sending me away?

Harpagon. It well becomes you, you hang-dog, to ask me my reasons. Out with you, quickly, that I may not knock you down.

La Flèche. What have I done to you?

Harpagon. You have done so much to me that I wish you to get out.

La Flèche. Your son, my master, has ordered me to wait.

Harpagon. Go and wait for him in the street, then; but do not remain in my house, planted bolt upright as a sentry, taking notice of everything that goes on, and making the best use of it. I will not have a spy over my concerns eternally before my eyes, a wretch, whose cursed eyes watch every one of my actions, covet all I have, and ferret about everywhere to see if there is nothing to pilfer.

La Flèche. How the deuce could one manage to rob you? Are you a likely man to have aught stolen from you, when you lock up everything, and keep guard day and night?

Harpagon. I shall lock up whatever I think fit, and keep guard as long as I please. A nice pass it has come to with these spies, who take notice of everything one does. (*Softly, aside*). I quake for fear he should suspect something about my money. (*Aloud*). Ah! are you not just the fellow who would think nothing of bruiting the tale about that I have money hidden in my house?

La Flèche. You have money hidden?

Harpagon. No, you scoundrel, I do not say that. (*To himself*). I am bursting with rage. (*Aloud*). I ask whether you would not from sheer malice, bruit the story about that I have some.

La Flèche. Eh! what does it matter to us whether you have any or not, as long as it comes to the same thing to us?

Harpagon (lifting up his hand, to slap La Flèche's face). You are arguing the matter! I will give you something for this reasoning on your ears. Once more, get out of this.

La Flèche. Very well! I am going.

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Harpagon. Wait: you are not taking anything away with you?

La Flèche. What should I take from you?

Harpagon. I do not know until I look. Show me your hands?

La Flèche. Here they are.

Harpagon. The others.

La Flèche. The others?

Harpagon. Yes.

La Flèche. Here they are.

Harpagon (pointing to the breeches of La Flèche). Have you put nothing in there?

La Flèche. Look for yourself!

Harpagon (feeling the outside of La Flèche's pockets). Those wide breeches are just fit to become receivers for things purloined, and I wish one of them had been hanged at the gallows.

La Flèche (aside). Ah, how a man like this well deserves the thing he fears! and how much pleasure I would have in robbing him!

Harpagon. Eh?

La Flèche. What?

Harpagon. What are you muttering about robbing!

La Flèche. I am saying that you feel carefully everywhere to see if I have robbed you.

Harpagon. That is what I mean to do. (*Harpagon fumbles in La Flèche's pockets.*)

La Flèche (aside). May the plague take avarice and all avaricious people!

Harpagon. What! what are you saying?

La Flèche. What am I saying?

Harpagon. Yes; what are you saying about avarice and avaricious people?

La Flèche. I say may the plague take avarice and all avaricious people.

Harpagon. To whom are you alluding?

La Flèche. To avaricious people.

Harpagon. And who are they, these avaricious people?

La Flèche. Villains and curmudgeons.

Harpagon. But whom do you mean by that?

La Flèche. What are you troubling yourself about?

Harpagon. I am troubling myself about what concerns me.

La Flèche. Do you think that I am speaking of you?

Harpagon. I think what I think; but I wish you to tell me to whom you are addressing yourself when you say that.

La Flèche. I am addressing myself — I am addressing myself to my cap.

Harpagon. And I might address myself to the head that is in it.

La Flèche. Will you prevent me from cursing avaricious people?

Harpagon. No: but I will prevent you from jabbering, and from being insolent. Hold your tongue!

La Flèche. I name no one.

Harpagon. I shall thrash you if you say another word.

La Flèche. Whom the cap fits, let him wear it.

Harpagon. Will you hold your tongue?

La Flèche. Yes, against my will.

Harpagon. Ah! Ah!

La Flèche (showing Harpagon a pocket in his doublet). Just look, there is another pocket; are you satisfied?

Harpagon. Come, you had better give it up without my searching you.

La Flèche. What?

Harpagon. What you have taken from me.

La Flèche. I have taken nothing at all from you.

Harpagon. Assuredly?

La Flèche. Assuredly.

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Harpagon. Good-bye, then, and go to the devil.

La Flèche (aside). That is a pretty dismissal.

Harpagon. I leave you to your own conscience, at least.

Scene IV.—Harpagon, *alone.*

There is a hang-dog of a valet who is very much in my way; I do not at all care to see this limping cur about the place. It is certainly no small trouble to keep such a large sum of money in one's house; and he is a happy man who has all his well laid out at interest, and keeps only so much by him as is necessary for his expenses. One is not a little puzzled to contrive, in the whole house, a safe hiding-place; for, as far as I am concerned, I distrust safes, and would never rely on them. I look upon them just as a distinct bait to burglars; for it is always the first thing which they attack.

Scene V.—Harpagon; Elise and Cléante *conversing together at the farther end of the stage.*

Harpagon (still thinking himself alone). For all that, I am not quite sure if I have done right in burying in my garden these ten thousand crowns, which were paid to me yesterday. Ten thousand golden crowns in one's house is a sum sufficient.— (*aside, perceiving Elise and Cléante*). Oh, Heavens! I have betrayed myself! The excitement has carried me too far, and I verily believe I have spoken aloud, while arguing to myself. (*To Cléante and Elise*). What is the matter?

Cléante. Nothing, father?

Harpagon. Have you been there long?

Elise. We were just coming in.

Harpagon. You have heard —

Elise. What?

Harpagon. What I said just now.

Cléante. No.

Harpagon. Yes, You have.

Elise. I beg your pardon.

Harpagon. I see well enough that you overheard some words. I was talking to myself about the difficulty one experiences now-a-days in finding money, and I was saying how pleasant it must be to have ten thousand crowns in the house.

Cléante. We hesitated to speak to you, for fear of interrupting you.

Harpagon. I am very glad to tell you this, so that you may not take things the wrong way, and imagine that I said that I myself had ten thousand crowns.

Cléante. We have no wish to enter into your concerns.

Harpagon. Would to Heaven that I had them, ten thousand crowns!

Cléante. I do not think —

Harpagon. It would be a capital affair for me.

Elise. These are things —

Harpagon. I am greatly in need of them.

Cléante. I think —

Harpagon. That would suit me very well.

Elise. You are —

Harpagon. And I should not have to complain as I do now, about the hard times.

Cléante. Good Heavens! father, you have no need to complain, and we know that you have wealth enough.

Harpagon. How! I wealth enough! Those who say so surely tell a lie. Nothing could be more false; and they are but a pack of rascals who spread all these reports about.

Elise. Do not put yourself in a rage.

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Harpagon. A strange thing, that my own children should betray me, and become my enemies.

Cléante. Is it becoming your enemy to say that you have wealth?

Harpagon. Yes. Such talk, and the expenses you indulge in will be the cause that one of these fine days people will come and cut my throat, in my own house, in the belief that I am stuffed with gold pieces.

Cléante. What great expenses do I indulge in?

Harpagon. Expenses? Can anything be more scandalous than this sumptuous attire, which you exhibit about the town? I scolded your sister yesterday; but this is much worse. This cries aloud to Heaven for vengeance; for, take you from top to toe, there is enough to ensure a handsome competency. I have told you twenty times, son, that all your manners displease me; you are furiously aping the aristocracy; and to go dressed as you do, you must rob me.

Cléante. Eh! how rob you?

Harpagon. How do I know? Where can you get the means of Keeping up such an appearance?

Cléante. I, father? it is because I play; and, as I am very lucky, I put my winnings on my back.

Harpagon. That is very bad. If you are lucky at play, you should profit by it, and lay out the money you win at decent interest, that you may provide for a rainy day. I should much like to know, leaving all other things aside, what the good can be of all these ribbons with which you are decked out from head to foot, and if half-a-dozen tacks are not sufficient to fasten your breeches. Is it at all necessary to spend money upon wigs? when one can wear hair of home growth, which costs nothing! I would bet that your wig and ribbons cost for more than twenty pistoles, and twenty pistoles, at a little more than eight per cent. bring in eighteen livres, six pence, and eight groats a year.

Cléante. You are perfectly right.

Harpagon. Let us leave the subject, and talk of other things. (*Perceiving that Cléante and Elise interchange glances*). Eh! (*Softly, aside*). I believe that they are making signs to each other to rob me of my purse. (*Aloud*). What mean those gestures?

Elise. My brother and I are arguing who shall speak first. We have each something to say to you.

Harpagon. And I have something to say to you both.

Cléante. It is about marriage that we wish to speak to you, father.

Harpagon. And it is also about marriage that I wish to converse with you.

Elise. Ah, father!

Harpagon. Why this cry? Is it the word, or the thing itself that frightens you, daughter?

Cléante. The way you may look at marriage may frighten us both; and we fear that your sentiments may not happen to chime in with our choice.

Harpagon. A little patience; do not alarm yourselves. I know what is good for you both, and neither the one nor the other shall have cause to complain of what I intend to do. To begin at one end of the story (*to Cléante*), tell me, have you noticed a young person called Mariane, who lodges not far from here?

Cléante. Yes, father.

Harpagon. And you?

Elise. I have heard her spoken of.

Harpagon. How do you like that girl, son?

Cléante. A very charming person.

Harpagon. What do you think of her countenance?

Cléante. Very genteel, and full of intelligence.

Harpagon. Her air and manner?

Cléante. Without doubt, admirable.

Harpagon. Do you not think that a girl like that deserves to be taken notice of?

Cléante. Yes, father.

Harpagon. That it would be a desirable match?

Cléante. Very desirable.

Harpagon. That she looks as if she would make a good wife?

Cléante. Undoubtedly.

Harpagon. And that a husband would have reason to be satisfied with her?

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Cléante. Assuredly.

Harpagon. There is a slight difficulty. I fear that she has not as much money as one might reasonably pretend to.

Cléante. Ah! father, money is not worth considering when there is a question of marrying a respectable girl.

Harpagon. Not so, not so. But this much may be said, that if one finds not quite so much money as one might wish, there is a way of regaining it in other things.

Cléante. Of course.

Harpagon. Well, I am very glad to see that you share my sentiments; for her genteel behaviour and her gentleness have quite gained my heart, and I have made up my mind to marry her, provided she has some dowry.

Cléante. Eh!

Harpagon. What now?

Cléante. You have made up your mind, you say --

Harpagon. To marry Mariane.

Cléante. Who? You, you?

Harpagon. Yes, I, I, I. What means this?

Cléante. I feel a sudden giddiness, and I had better go.

Harpagon. It will be nothing. Go quickly into the kitchen, and drink a large glassful of cold water.

Scene VI.--Harpagon, Elise.

Harpagon. A lot of flimsy sparks, with no more strength than chickens. Daughter, this is what I have resolved upon for myself. As for your brother, I intend him for a certain widow, of whom they spoke to me this morning; and you, I will give to M. Anselme.

Elise. To M. Anselme?

Harpagon. Yes, a staid, prudent, and careful man, who is not above fifty, and whose wealth is spoken of everywhere.

Elise (making a curtsey). I have no wish to get married, father, if you please.

Harpagon (imitating her). And I, my dear girl, my pet, I wish you to get married, if you please.

Elise (Curtseying once more). I beg your pardon, father.

Harpagon (imitating Elise). I beg your pardon, daughter.

Elise. I am M. Anselme's most humble servant (*curtseying again*); but, with your leave, I shall not marry him.

Harpagon. I am your most humble slave, but (*imitating Elise*) with your leave, you shall marry him not later than this evening.

Elise. Not later than this evening?

Harpagon. Not later than this evening.

Elise (curtseying again). That shall not be, father.

Harpagon (imitating her again). This shall be, daughter.

Elise. No.

Harpagon. Yes.

Elise. No, I tell you.

Harpagon. Yes, I tell you.

Elise. That is a thing you shall not drive me to.

Harpagon. That is a thing I shall drive you to.

Elise. I will kill myself sooner than marry such a husband.

Harpagon. You shall not kill yourself, and you shall marry him. But has such boldness ever been seen! Has ever a daughter been heard to speak to her father in this manner?

Elise. But has any one ever seen a father give away his daughter in marriage in this manner?

Harpagon. It is a match to which no one can object; and I bet that every one will approve of my choice.

Elise. And I bet that no reasonable being will approve of it.

Harpagon. (perceiving Valère in the distance). Here comes Valère. Shall we make him judge betwixt us in this

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matter?

Elise. I consent to it.

Harpagon. Will you submit to his judgment?

Elise. Yes; I will submit to what he shall decide.

Harpagon. That is agreed.

Scene VII.—Valère, Harpagon, Elise.

Harpagon. Come here, Valère. We have elected you to tell us who is in the right, my daughter or I.

Valère. You, Sir, beyond gainsay.

Harpagon. Are you aware of what we are talking?

Valère. No. But you could not be in the wrong. You are made up of right.

Harpagon. I intend, this evening, to give her for a husband a man who is as rich as he is discreet; and the jade tells me to my face that she will not take him. What say you to this?

Valère. What do I say to it?

Harpagon. Yes.

Valère. Eh! eh!

Harpagon. What?

Valère. I say, that in the main, I am of your opinion; and you cannot but be right. But on the other side, she is not altogether wrong, and —

Harpagon. How is that? M. Anselme is a desirable match; he is a gentleman who is noble, kind, steady, discreet, and very well to do, and who has neither chick nor child left him from his first marriage. Could she meet with a better match?

Valère. That is true. But she might say to you that it is hurrying things a little too much, and that you should give her some time at least to see whether her inclinations would agree with —

Harpagon. This is an opportunity which should be taken by the forelock. I find in this marriage an advantage which I could not find elsewhere; and he agrees to take her without a dowry.

Valère. Without a dowry?

Harpagon. Yes.

Valère. In that case, I say no more. Do you see, this is altogether a convincing reason; one must yield to that.

Harpagon. It is a considerable saving to me.

Valère. Assuredly; it cannot be gainsaid. It is true that your daughter might represent to you that marriage is a more important matter than you think; that it involves a question of being happy or miserable all one's life; and that an engagement which must last till death ought never to be entered upon except with great precautions.

Harpagon. Without a dowry!

Valère. You are right. That decides it all, of course. There are people who might tell you that on such an occasion the wishes of a daughter are something, no doubt, that ought to be taken into consideration; and that this great disparity of age, of temper, and of feelings makes a marriage subject to very sad accidents.

Harpagon. Without a dowry!

Valère. Ah! there is no reply to that; I know that well enough. Who the deuce could say anything against that? Not that there are not many fathers who would prefer to humour the wishes of their daughters to the money they could give them; who would not sacrifice them to their own interests, and who would, above all things, try to infuse into marriage that sweet conformity, which, at all times, maintains honour, peace, and joy; and which —

Harpagon. Without a dowry!

Valère. It is true; that closes one's mouth at once. Without a dowry! There are no means of resisting an argument like that.

Harpagon (aside, looking towards the garden). Bless my soul! I think I hear a dog barking. Most likely it is some one with a design on my money. (*To Valère.*) Do not stir; I am coming back directly.

Scene VIII.—Elise, Valère.

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Elise. Are you jesting, Valère, to speak to him in that manner?

Valère. It is in order not to sour his temper, and to gain my end the better. To run counter to his opinions is the way to spoil everything; and there are certain minds which cannot be dealt with in a straightforward manner; temperaments averse to all resistance; restive characters, whom the truth causes to rear, who always set their faces against the straight road of reason, and whom you cannot lead except by turning them with their back towards the goal. Pretend to consent to what he wishes, you will gain your end all the better; and —

Elise. But this marriage, Valère!

Valère. We will find some pretext to break it off.

Elise. But what to invent, if it is to be consummated this evening?

Valère. You must ask for a delay, and pretend to be ill.

Elise. But the feint will be discovered, if they call in the doctors.

Valère. Are you jesting? What do they know about it? Come, come, with them you may have whatever illness you please; they will find you some reasons to tell you whence it proceeds.

Scene IX.—Harpagon, Elise, Valère.

Harpagon (aside, at the further end of the stage). It is nothing, thank Heaven.

Valère (not seeing Harpagon). In short, our last resource is flight, which will shelter us from everything; and if your love, fair Elise, be capable of acting with firmness — (*Perceiving Harpagon*). Yes, a daughter ought to obey her father. She ought not to look at the shape of a husband; and when the great argument of *without a dowry* is added to it, she must be ready to accept what is given to her.

Harpagon. Good: that is well spoken.

Valère. I crave your pardon, Sir, if I am a little warm, and take the liberty of speaking as I do.

Harpagon. How now! I am delighted with it, and I wish you to take an absolute control over her. (*To Elise*). Yes, you may run away as much as you like, I invest him with the authority which Heaven has given me over you, and I will have you do all that he tells you.

Valère (to Elise). After that, resist my remonstrances.

Scene X.—Harpagon, Valère.

Valère. With your leave, Sir, I will follow her, to continue the advice which I was giving her.

Harpagon. Yes, you will oblige me. By all means —

Valère. It is as well to keep her tight in hand.

Harpagon. True. We must —

Valère. Do not be uneasy. I think that I shall succeed.

Harpagon. Do, do, I am going to take a little stroll in town, and I shall be back presently.

Valère (addressing himself to Elise, leaving by the door, through which she went out). Yes, money is more precious than anything else in this world, and you ought to thank Heaven for having given you such an honest man for a father. He knows how to go through life. When any one offers to take a girl without a dowry, one should look no farther. It sums up everything; and *without dowry* makes up for beauty, youth, birth, honour, wisdom, and probity.

Harpagon. Ah! the honest fellow! He speaks like an oracle. It is a rare piece of luck to have such a servant!

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ACT II

Scene I.—Cléante, La Flèche.

Cléante. Ah! wretch that you are! where have you been? Did I not give you the order —

La Flèche. Yes, Sir; and I came here to wait for you without stirring: but your father, the most surely of men, ordered me out in spite of myself, at the risk of a thrashing.

Cléante. How is our affair getting on? Matters press more than ever, and since I have seen you, I have found out that my father is my rival.

La Flèche. Your father in love?

Cléante. Yes; and I have had the utmost difficulty in concealing from him the trouble which these tidings have caused me.

La Flèche. He meddle with love! What the devil put that in his head? Is he making fun of every one? and has love been made for people like him?

Cléante. This passion must have got into his head to punish me for my sins.

La Flèche. But for what reason do you keep your love a secret from him?

Cléante. In order to give him less suspicion, and to keep, if needs be, the means open for dissuading him from this marriage. What answer have they made to you?

La Flèche. Upon my word, Sir, borrowers are very unlucky people; and one must put up with strange things, when one is compelled, like you, to pass through the hands of money-lenders.

Cléante. Will the affair fall through?

La Flèche. I beg your pardon. Our Master Simon, the agent who has been recommended to us, an active and zealous man, says that he has done wonders for you, and he assures me that your face alone has won his heart.

Cléante. Shall I have the fifteen thousand francs which I want?

La Flèche. Yes, but with some trifling conditions which you must accept, if you purpose that the affair should be carried through.

Cléante. Has he allowed you to speak to the person who is to lend the money?

La Flèche. Ah! really, things are not managed in that way. He takes even more care to remain unknown than you do; and these things are much greater mysteries than you think. Simon would not tell me his name at all, and he will be confronted with you to-day in a house borrowed for the occasion, to be informed by you, personally, of your own substance and that of your family; and I have no doubt that the very name of your father may make things go smoothly.

Cléante. And above all our mother being dead, whose property cannot be alienated.

La Flèche. Here are some clauses, which he has himself dictated to our go-between, to be shown to you before doing anything:—"Provided that the lender see all his securities, and that the borrower be of age, and of a family whose estate is ample, solid, secure, and undoubted, and free from all incumbrance, a binding and correct bond shall be executed before a notary, the most honest man to be found, and who, for this purpose, shall be chosen by the borrower, to whom it is of the greatest importance that the instrument shall be regularly drawn up."

Cléante. There is nothing to object to that.

La Flèche. "The lender, in order not to charge his conscience with the least scruple, will only lend his money at a little more than five and a half per cent."

Cléante. At a little more than five and a half per cent? Zounds! that is honest enough. There is no reason to complain.

La Flèche. That is true. "But as the lender has not the sum in question by him, and as, to oblige the borrower, he is himself obliged to borrow it of some one at the rate of twenty per cent., it shall be agreed that the said first borrower shall pay this interest, without prejudice of the rest, seeing that it is only to oblige him that the said lender takes up that loan."

Cléante. What the devil! what Jew, what Arab is this? This is more than twenty-five per cent.

La Flèche. It is true, that is what I have said. It is for you to see to that.

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Cléante. What can I see? I want the money, and I am bound to consent to everything.

La Flèche. That is the answer which I made.

Cléante. There is something else still?

La Flèche. Nothing but a small matter. "Of the fifteen thousand francs required, the lender can count down in cash only twelve thousand; and, for the remaining thousand crowns, the borrower will have to take them out in chattels, clothing, and jewelry, of which the following is the memorandum, and which the lender has set down honestly at the lowest possible price."

Cléante. What does this mean?

La Flèche. Listen to the memorandum. "First, a four-post bed, elegantly adorned with Hungary-lace bands, with hangings of olive coloured cloth, with six chairs, and a counterpane of the same; the whole in very good condition, and lined with a shot taffetas, red and blue. Item: a tester for this bed, of good Aumale, pale rose-coloured serge, with large and small silk fringes."

Cléante. What does he want me to do with it?

La Flèche. Wait. "Item: Tapestry hangings, representing the loves of Gombaud and Macée. Item: a large walnut table, with twelve columns or turned legs, which draws out at both sides, provided with six stools underneath it."

Cléante. What have I to do, egad! —

La Flèche. Only have patience. "Item: three large muskets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with the necessary rests. Item: a brick furnace, with two retorts, and three receivers very useful for those who have a turn for distilling."

Cléante. I am going mad.

La Flèche. Gently. "Item: a bologna lute with all its strings, or nearly all. Item: a trou-madame table, a draught-board, with the game of mother goose, restored from the Greeks, very agreeable to pass the time when one has nothing else to do. Item: a lizzard's skin of three feet and a half, stuffed with hay: a very pretty curiosity to hang at the ceiling of a room. The whole of the above-mentioned, really worth more than four thousand five hundred francs, and brought down to the value of a thousand crowns, through the discretion of the lender."

Cléante. May the plague choke him with his discretion, the wretch, the cut-throat that he is! Has one ever heard of similar usury? Is he not satisfied with the tremendous interest which he demands, but must needs force me to take for the three thousand francs the old lumber which he picks up? I shall not get two hundred crowns for the whole of it; and nevertheless I must make up my mind to consent to what he wishes; for he has it in his power to make me accept anything; and the scoundrel holds me with a knife to my throat.

La Flèche. Without offence, Sir, I see you exactly on the high road which Panurge took to ruin himself: taking money in advance, buying dear, selling cheap, and eating his corn whilst it was but grass.

Cléante. What am I to do? See to what young people are reduced by the cursed stinginess of their fathers, and then people are surprised when sons wish their fathers dead!

La Flèche. One must confess that yours, with his stinginess, would incense the steadiest man in the world. I have, Heaven be praised, no very great inclination to be hanged; and, among my colleagues whom I see dabbling in many trifling things, I know well enough how to get cleverly out of a scrape, and to keep as clear as possible of those little amenities which savour more or less of the rope; but, to tell you the truth, he would, by his way of acting, give me the temptation to rob him; and I verily believe that, by doing so, I would commit a meritorious action.

Cléante. Give me this memorandum, that I may have another look at it.

Scene II.—Harpagon, Master Simon, Cléante and La Flèche at the farther end of the stage.

Simon. Yes, Sir, it is a young man who is in want of money; his affairs compel him to find some, and he will consent to all that you dictate to him.

Harpagon. But think you, Master Simon, that there is no risk to run? and do you know the name, the property, and the family of him for whom you speak?

Simon. No. In reality I cannot well inform you about that, and it is only by chance that I have been

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recommended to him; but he will himself explain all these things to you, and his servant has assured me that you will be satisfied when you shall know him. All that I am able to tell you is that his family is very rich, that he has already lost his mother, and he will engage himself, if you wish it, that his father shall die before eight months are over.

Harpagon. That is something. Charity, Master Simon, enjoins us to be agreeable to people when we can.

Simon. That needs no comment.

La Flèche (softly, to Cléante, recognizing Master Simon). What does this mean? Master Simon who is speaking to your father?

Cléante (softly, to La Flèche). Can any one have told him who I am and are you perhaps betraying me?

Simon (to Cléante and La Flèche). Ah, ah! you are in a great hurry! Who told you that it was here. (*To HARPAGON*). It is not I, at least, Sir, who have given them your name and address; but, in my opinion, there is no great harm in this; they are discreet persons, and you can here come to an understanding with one another.

Harpagon. How?

Simon (pointing to Cléante). This gentleman is the party who wishes to borrow the fifteen thousand francs of which I spoke.

Harpagon. What, hangdog, it is you who abandon yourself to these culpable extravagances.

Cléante. What! it is you, father, who lend yourself to these shameful deeds!

(*Master Simon runs away, and La Flèche hides himself.*)

Scene III.—Harpagon, Cléante.

Harpagon. It is you who wish to ruin yourself by such censurable loans?

Cléante. It is you who seek to enrich yourself by such criminal usury?

Harpagon. Can you dare, after this, to appear before me?

Cléante. Can you dare, after this, to show your face to the world.

Harpagon. Are you not ashamed, tell me to practice this sort of excess, to rush into these dreadful expenses, and to dissipate so shamefully the property which your parents have amassed for you by the sweat of their brow?

Cléante. Do you not blush to dishonour your station by the trade you are engaged in; to sacrifice glory and reputation to the insatiable desire of piling crown upon crown, and to surpass, in matters of interest, the most infamous tricks that were ever invented by the most notorious usurers?

Harpagon. Begone out of my sight, scoundrel! begone out of my sight!

Cléante. Who, think you, is the more criminal—he who buys the money of which he is in need, or he who steals money for which he has no use?

Harpagon. Begone, I say, and do not break the drums of my ears. (*Alone*). After all, I am not so vexed about this adventure; it will be a lesson to me to keep more than ever an eye upon his proceedings.

Scene IV.—Frosine, Harpagon.

Frosine. Sir.

Harpagon. Wait a moment: I shall be back directly to speak to you. (*Aside*). I had better go and take a look at my money.

Scene V.—La Flèche, Frosine.

La Flèche (without seeing Frosine). The adventure is altogether funny! He must have somewhere a large store of furniture; for we could recognize nothing here from what is in the memorandum.

Frosine. Eh! is it you, my poor La Flèche! How comes this meeting?

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La Flèche. Ah! ah! it is you, Frosine! What brings you here?

Frosine. The same that brings me everywhere else; to fetch and carry, to render myself serviceable to people, and to profit as much as possible by the small talents of which I am possessed. You know that in this world we must live by our wits, and that to persons like me, Heaven has given no other income than intrigue and industry.

La Flèche. Have you any dealings with the master of this house?

Frosine. Yes. I am arranging some small matter for him, for which I expect a reward.

La Flèche. From him? Ah! you will have to be wide-awake enough if you get anything out of him; and I warn you that money is very scarce in this house.

Frosine. There are certain services that touch to the quick marvellously.

La Flèche. I am your humble servant. You do not know M. Harpagon yet. M. Harpagon is of all human beings the least human, of all mortals the hardest and most close-fisted. There is no service that touches his gratitude deeply enough to make him unloose his purse-strings. Praise, esteem, kindness in words, and friendship, as much as you like; but money, nothing of the kind. There is nothing drier and more arid than his good graces and his caresses; and *to give* is a word for which he has such an aversion, that he never says: *I give you*, but *I lend you good day*.

Frosine. Gad! I have the art of drawing something out of people; I have the secret of entering into their affections, of tickling their hearts, and of finding out their most sensitive spots.

La Flèche. Of no avail here. I defy you to soften the man we are speaking of, so that he will give money. Upon this subject he is a Turk, but of a turkishness to cause the despair of everyone; and one might starve, and he would not budge. In one word, he loves money better than reputation, than honour, and than virtue; and the very sight of one who asks for it sends him into fits; it is touching him in his mortal part, it is piercing his heart, it is tearing out his very entrails; and if — But he is coming back; I am going.

Scene VI.—Harpagon, Frosine.

Harpagon (aside). Everything is going on right. (*Aloud*). Well! what is it, Frosine?

Frosine. Gad, how well you are looking; you are the very picture of health!

Harpagon. Who? I!

Frosine. I never saw you with such a fresh and jolly complexion.

Harpagon. Really?

Frosine. How? You never in your life looked so young as you do now; I see people of five-and-twenty who look older than you.

Harpagon. I am over sixty, nevertheless, Frosine.

Frosine. Well! what does that signify, sixty years? that is nothing to speak of! It is the very flower of one's age, that is; and you are just entering the prime of manhood.

Harpagon. That is true; but twenty years less would do me no harm, I think.

Frosine. Are you jesting? You have no need of that, and you are made of the stuff to live a hundred.

Harpagon. Do you think so?

Frosine. Indeed I do. You show all the signs of it. Hold up your head a moment. Yes, it is there, well enough between your eyes, a sign of long life!

Harpagon. You are a judge of that sort of thing?

Frosine. Undoubtedly I am. Show me your hand. Good heavens, what a line of life!

Harpagon. How?

Frosine. Do you not see how far this line goes?

Harpagon. Well! what does it mean?

Frosine. Upon my word, I said a hundred; but you shall pass six score.

Harpagon. Is it possible?

Frosine. They will have to kill you, I tell you; and you shall bury your children, and your children's children.

Harpagon. So much the better! How is our affair getting on?

Frosine. Need you ask? Does one ever see me meddle with anything that I do not bring to an issue? But for

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match-making, especially, I have a marvellous talent. There are not two people in the world whom I cannot manage, in a very short time, to couple together; and I believe that, if I took it into my head, I should marry the grand Turk to the republic of Venice. To be' sure, there were no very great difficulties in this matter. As I am intimate with the ladies, I have often spoken to each of them, of you; and I have told the mother of the design which you had upon Mariane, from seeing her pass in the street, and taking the fresh air at her window.

Harpagon. Who answered —

Frosine. She has received your proposal with joy; and when I gave her to understand that you very much wished her daughter to be present this evening at the marriage-contract, which was to be signed for yours, she consented without difficulty, and has entrusted her to me for the purpose.

Harpagon. It is because I am obliged to offer a supper to M. Anselme; and I shall be glad that she share the treat.

Frosine. You are right. She is to pay a visit after dinner to your daughter, whence she intends to take a turn in the fair, to come and sup here afterwards.

Harpagon. Well! they shall go together in my coach, which I will lend them.

Frosine. That will do very nicely.

Harpagon. But, Frosine, have you spoken to the mother respecting the portion she can give her daughter? Have you told her that she must bestir herself a little; that she should make some effort; that she must even bleed herself a little on an occasion like that? For, after all, one does not marry a girl without her bringing something.

Frosine. How something! She is a girl who brings you twelve thousand francs a year.

Harpagon. Twelve thousand francs!

Frosine. Yes. To begin with; she has been brought up and accustomed to strict economy in feeding. She is a girl used to live on salad, milk, cheese, and apples; and who, in consequence, will neither want a well-appointed table, nor exquisite broths, nor peeled barley, at every turn, nor other delicacies which would be necessary to any other woman; and let these things cost ever so little, they always mount to about three thousand francs a-year at the least. Besides this, she has no taste for anything but the utmost simplicity, and does not care for sumptuous dresses, or valuable jewels or magnificent furniture, to which other young ladies are so much given; and that comes to more than four thousand francs per annum. In addition, she has a terrible aversion to gambling, not a common thing in women of the present day; for I know one in our neighbourhood who has lost more than twenty thousand francs this year at *trente-et-quarante*. But let us only estimate it at a fourth of that. Five thousand francs a year at play, and four thousand in jewelry and dresses, that makes nine thousand; and a thousand crowns, say, for the food: are there not your twelve thousand francs a year?

Harpagon. Yes: that is not so bad; but this reckoning contains, after all, nothing real.

Frosine. Pardon me. Is it not something real to bring you for a marriage portion great sobriety, the inheritance of a great love for simplicity of dress, and the acquisition of a great hatred for gambling?

Harpagon. Surely it is a joke to wish to make up her dowry to me out of expenses to which she will not go. I am not going to give a receipt for what I do not receive; and I shall have to get something down on the nail.

Frosine. Good gracious! you shall get enough; and they have spoken to me of a certain country where they have some property, whereof you will become the master.

Harpagon. That remains to be seen. But, Frosine, there is something else still which makes me uneasy. The girl is young, as you can see; and young people ordinarily love only their equals, and seek only their society. I am afraid that a man of my age may not be to her taste, and that this might produce certain little troubles in my house, which would not at all suit me.

Frosine. Ah! how little you know her! This is another peculiarity which I had to mention to you. She has a frightful aversion to young people, and cares for none except for old men.

Harpagon. She?

Frosine. Yes, she. I should like you to have heard her speak upon that subject. She cannot at all bear the sight of a young man; but nothing gives her greater delight, she says, than to behold a handsome old man with a majestic beard. The oldest are the most charming to her; so I warn you beforehand not to make yourself look younger than you really are. She wishes one at least to be a sexagenarian; and it is not more than four months ago, that, on the point of being married, she flatly broke off the match, when it came out that her lover was but fifty-six years of age, and that he did not put spectacles on to sign the contract.

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Harpagon. Only for that?

Frosine. Yes. She says fifty–six will not do for her; and that above all things she cares for noses that wear spectacles.

Harpagon. You certainly tell me something new there.

Frosine. She carries it farther than I could tell you. One may see some pictures and a few prints in her room; but what do you think they are? Portraits of Adonis, of Cephalus, of Paris, and of Apollo? Not at all. Beautiful likenesses of Saturn, of King Priam, of old Nestor, and of good father Anchises on his son's back.

Harpagon. This is admirable. That is what I should never have thought, and I am very glad to hear that she is of that disposition. In fact, had I been a woman, I should never have cared for young men.

Frosine. I should think so. A nice lot they are these young men, to care for them! pretty beauties, indeed, these fine sparks to be enamoured of! I should like to know what one can see in them!

Harpagon. As for me, I cannot understand it at all. I do not know how there are women who like them so much.

Frosine. They must be downright fools. Does it sound like common sense to think youth amiable? Are they men at all, these young fops, and can one love such animals?

Harpagon. That is what I say every day; with their voices like chicken–hearted fellows, three small hairs in the beard twirled like a cat's whiskers; their tow–wigs, their breeches quite hanging down, and their open breasts!

Frosine. Indeed! they are well built compared with a person like you! That is what I call a man; there is something there to please the sight; and that is the way to be made and dressed to inspire love.

Harpagon. Then you like my appearance?

Frosine. Do I like your appearance! You are charming; your figure is worth painting. Turn round a little, if you please. Nothing could be better. Let me see you walk. That is a well–built body, free and easy as it ought to be, and without a sign of illness.

Harpagon. None to speak of, thank Heaven. Nothing but my cough, which worries me now and then.

Frosine. That is nothing. It does not become you badly, seeing that you cough very gracefully.

Harpagon. Just tell me: has Mariane not seen me yet? She has not taken any notice of me in going past?

Frosine. No; but we have spoken a great deal of you. I have tried to paint your person to her, and I have not failed to vaunt your merits, and the advantage which it would be to her to have a husband like you.

Harpagon. You have done well and I thank you for it.

Frosine. I have, Sir, a slight request to make to you. I have a law–suit which I am on the point of losing for want of a little money (*Harpagon assumes a serious look*); and you might easily enable me to gain this suit by doing me a little kindness. You would not believe how delighted she will be to see you. (*Harpagon resumes his liveliness*). How you will charm her, and how this old–fashioned ruff will take her fancy! But above all things, she will like your breeches fastened to your doublet with tags; that will make her mad for you; and a lover who wears tags will be most acceptable to her.

Harpagon. Certainly, I am delighted to hear you say so.

Frosine. Really, sir, this law–suit is of the utmost consequence to me. (*Harpagon resumes his serious air.*) If I lose it, I am ruined; and some little assistance would set my affairs in order — I should like you to have seen her delight at hearing me speak of you. (*Harpagon resumes his liveliness*). Joy shone in her eyes at the enumeration of your good qualities; and, in short, I have made her very anxious to have this match entirely concluded.

Harpagon. You have pleased me very much, Frosine; and I confess that I am extremely obliged to you.

Frosine. I pray you, Sir, to give me the little assistance which I ask of you. (*Harpagon resumes his serious air.*) It will put me on my legs again, and I shall be for ever grateful to you.

Harpagon. Good–bye. I am going to finish my letters.

Frosine. I assure you, Sir, that you could never come to my relief in a greater need.

Harpagon. I will give orders that my coach be ready to take you to the fair.

Frosine. I would not trouble you, if I were not compelled to it from necessity.

Harpagon. And I will take care that the supper shall be served early, so as not to make you ill.

Frosine. Do not refuse me the service which I ask of you. You would not believe, Sir, the pleasure which —

Harpagon. I must be gone. Some one is calling me. Till by–and–by.

Frosine (alone). May ague seize you, and send you to the devil, you stingy cur! The rascal has resisted firmly

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all my attacks. But I must, for all that, not abandon the attempt; and I have got the other side, from whom, at any rate, I am certain to draw a good reward.

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ACT III

Scene I.—Harpagon, Cléante, Elise, Valère; Mistress Claude *holding a broom*, Master Jacques, La Merluche, Brindavoine.

Harpagon. Come here, all of you, that I may give you my orders for just now, and tell every one what he has to do. Come here, Mistress Claude; let us begin with you. (*Looking at her broom.*) That is right, arms in hand. I trust to you for cleaning up everywhere: and above all, take care not to rub the furniture too hard, for fear of wearing it out. Besides this, I appoint you to look after the bottles during the supper; and, if one is missing, or if something gets broken, I shall hold you responsible, and deduct it from your wages.

Jacques (aside). There is policy in that punishment. *Harpagon (to Mistress Claude).* You can go.

Scene II.—Harpagon, Cléante, Elise, Valère, Master Jacques, Brindavoine, La Merluche.

Harpagon. You, Brindavoine, and you, La Merluche, I confide to you the care of rinsing the glasses, and of serving out the drink, but only when the people are thirsty, and not in the manner of these impertinent lacqueys who come and provoke them, and put drinking into their heads when they have no thought of such a thing. Wait till you are asked for it more than once, and bear in mind always to bring a good deal of water.

Jacques (aside). Yes. Wine undiluted mounts to the head.

La Merluche. Shall we throw off our smocks, Sir?

Harpagon. Yes, when you see the people coming; and take care not to spoil your clothes.

Brindavoine. You know, Sir, that the front of my doublet is covered with a large stain of oil from the lamp.

La Merluche. And I, Sir, I have a large hole in the seat of my breeches, and saving your presence, people can see —

Harpagon. Peace; keep it adroitly to the side of the wall, and always show your front to the world. (*To Brindavoine, showing him how he is to keep his hat before his doublet, in order to hide the stain.*) And you, always hold your hat thus while you are waiting upon the guests.

Scene III.—Harpagon, Cléante, Elise, Valère, Master Jacques.

Harpagon. As for you, daughter, you will keep an eye upon what goes away from the table, and take care that nothing be wasted. It becomes girls to do so. Meanwhile, get yourself ready to receive my intended properly. She is coming to visit you, and will take you to the fair with her. Do you hear what I say to you?

Elise. Yes, father.

Scene IV.—Harpagon, Cléante, Valère, Master Jacques.

Harpagon. And you, my foppish son, to whom I have been good enough to forgive what has happened just now, do not take it into your head to show her a sour face.

Cléante. I! father? a sour face. And for what reason?

Harpagon. Egad! we know the ways of children whose fathers marry again, and with what sort of eyes they are in the habit of looking at their so-called stepmothers. But if you wish me to lose the recollection of this last escapade of yours, I recommend you, above all, to show this lady a friendly countenance, and to give her, in fact, the best possible reception.

Cléante. To tell you the truth, father, I cannot promise you to be glad that she is to become my stepmother. I should tell a lie if I said so to you; but as for receiving her well and showing her a friendly countenance, I promise

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to obey you punctually on this head.

Harpagon. Take care you do, at least.

Cléante. You shall see that you shall have no cause to complain.

Harpagon. You had better.

Scene V.—Harpagon, Valère, Master Jacques.

Harpagon. You will have to help me in this, Valère. Now, Master Jacques, draw near, I have left you for the last.

Jacques. Is it to your coachman, Sir, or to your cook, that you wish to speak? For I am both the one and the other.

Harpagon. It is to both.

Jacques. But to which of the two first?

Harpagon. To the cook.

Jacques. Then wait a minute, if you please.

ames of miser, curmudgeon, hunks and usurer.

Harpagon. (*thrashing Master Jacques.*) You are a numscull, a rascal, a scoundrel, and an impudent fellow.

Jacques. Well! did I not say so beforehand? You would not believe me. I told you well enough that I should make you angry by telling you the truth.

Harpagon. That will teach you how to speak.

Scene VI.—Valère, Master Jacques.

Valère. (*laughing.*) From what I can see, Master Jacques, your candour is ill rewarded.

Jacques. Zounds! Master Upstart, who assume the man of consequence, it is not your business. Laugh at your cudgel—blows when you shall receive them, but do not come here to laugh at mine.

Valère. Ah! Sir Master Jacques, do not get angry, I beg of you.

Jacques (*aside*). He is knuckling under. I shall bully him, and, if he is fool enough to be afraid of me, I shall give him a gentle drubbing. (*Aloud*). Are you aware, Master Laughter, that I am not in a laughing humour, and that if you annoy me, I will make you laugh on the wrong side of your mouth?

e of my son; he is a young fool, who does not as yet know the consequences of what he says.

Mariane. I promise you that what he has said has not at all offended me; on the contrary, he has pleased me by explaining thus his real feelings. I like such an avowal from his lips; and if he had spoken in any other way, I should have esteemed him the less for it.

Harpagon. It is too good of you to be willing thus to condone his faults. Time will make him wiser, and you shall see that he will alter his sentiments.

Cléante. No, father, I am incapable of changing upon that point, and I beg urgently of this lady to believe me.

Harpagon. But see what madness! he goes still more strongly.

Cléante. Do you wish me to go against my own heart?

Harpagon. Again! Perhaps you will be kind enough to change the conversation.

Cléante. Well! since you wish to speak in a different manner, allow me, Madam, to put myself in my father's place, and to confess to you that I have seen nothing in the world so charming as you; that I conceive nothing equal to the happiness of pleasing you, and that the title of your husband is a glory, a felicity which I would prefer to the destinies of the greatest princes on earth. Yes, Madam, the happiness of possessing you is, in my eyes, the best of all good fortunes; the whole of my ambition points to that. There is nothing which I would shrink from to make so precious a conquest; and the most powerful obstacles —

Harpagon. Gently, son, if you please.

Cléante. It is a compliment which I pay for you to this lady.

Harpagon. Good Heavens! I have a tongue to explain myself, and I have no need of an interpreter like you.

The Miser

Come, hand chairs.

Frosine. No; it is better that we should go to the fair now, so that we may return the sooner, and have ample time afterwards to converse with you.

Harpagon (to Brindavoine). Have the horses put to the carriage.

Scene XII.—Harpagon, Mariane, Elise, Cléante, Valère, Frosine.

Harpagon (to Mariane). I pray you to excuse me, fair child, if I forgot to offer you some refreshments before going.

Cléante. I have provided for it, father, and have ordered some plates of China oranges, sweet citrons, and preserves, which I have sent for in your name.

Harpagon (softly to Valère). Valère!

Valère (to Harpagon). He has lost his senses.

Cléante. Do you think, father, that it is not sufficient? This lady will have the goodness to excuse that, if it please her.

Mariane. It was not at all necessary.

Cléante. Have you ever seen, Madam, a diamond more sparkling than the one which you see on my father's finger?

Mariane. It sparkles much indeed.

Cléante (taking the diamond off his father's finger, and handing it to Mariane). You must see it close.

Mariane. It is no doubt very beautiful, and throws out a deal of light.

Cléante (placing himself before Mariane, who is about to return the diamond). No, Madam, it is in hands too beautiful. It is a present which my father makes you.

Harpagon. I?

Cléante. Is it not true, father, that you wish this lady to keep it for your sake.

Harpagon (softly to his son). How?

Cléante (to Mariane). A pretty request indeed! He has given me a sign to make you accept it.

Mariane. I do not wish to --

Cléante (to Mariane). Are you jesting? He does not care to take it back.

Harpagon (aside). I am bursting with rage!

Mariane. It would be --

Cléante (preventing Mariane from returning the diamond). No, I tell you; you would offend him.

Mariane. Pray --

Cléante. Not at all.

Harpagon (aside). May the plague --

Cléante. He is getting angry at your refusal.

Harpagon (softly to his son). Ah! you wretch!

Cléante (to Mariane). You see that he is getting desperate.

Harpagon (in a suppressed tone to his son, threatening him). Murderer that you are!

Cléante. It is not my fault, father. I am doing all that I can to make her keep it; but she is obstinate.

Harpagon (in a great passion, whispering to his son). Hangdog!

Cléante. You are the cause, Madam, of my father's upbraiding me.

Harpagon (same as before, to his son). The scoundrel!

Cléante (to Mariane). You will make him ill. Pray, Madam, do not resist any longer.

Frosine (to Mariane). Good Heavens, what ceremonies! Keep the ring, since the gentleman wishes it.

Mariane (to Harpagon). Not to put you into a passion, I shall keep it now, and I shall take another opportunity of returning it to you.

Scene XIII.--Harpagon, Mariane, Elise, Cléante, Valère, Frosine, Brindavoine.

The Miser

Brindavoine. Sir, there is a man who wishes to speak to you.

Harpagon. Tell him that I am engaged, that he is to return at another time.

Brindavoine. He says that he brings you some money.

Harpagon (to Mariane). I beg your pardon; I shall be back directly.

Scene XIV.—Harpagon, Mariane, Elise, Cléante, Valère, Frosine, La Merluche.

Merluche (running against Harpagon, whom he knocks down). Sir --

Harpagon. Oh! I am killed!

Cléante. What is it, father? have you hurt yourself?

Harpagon. The wretch has surely been bribed by my debtors to make me break my neck.

Valère (to Harpagon). That will be nothing.

Merluche (to Harpagon). I beg your pardon, Sir; I thought I was doing well in running quickly.

Harpagon. What have you come here for, you hang-dog?

Merluche. To tell you that your two horses have lost their shoes.

Harpagon. Let them be taken to the farrier immediately.

Cléante. While waiting for their being shod, I will do the honours of your house for you, father, and conduct this lady into the garden, whither I shall have the refreshments brought.

Scene XV.—Harpagon, Valère.

Harpagon. Valère, keep your eye a little on this, and take care, I pray you, to save as much of it as you can, to send back to the tradespeople.

Valère. I know.

Harpagon (alone). Oh, impertinent son! do you mean to ruin me?

The Miser

ACT IV

Scene I.—Cléante, Mariane, Elise, Frosine.

Cléante. Let us go in here; we shall be much better. There is no suspicious person near us now, and we can converse freely.

Elise. Yes, Madam, my brother has confided to me the affection which he feels for you. I am aware of the grief and unpleasantness which such obstacles are capable of causing; and it is, I assure you, with the utmost tenderness that I interest myself in your adventure.

Mariane. It is a sweet consolation to see some one like you in one's interest; and I implore you, Madam, always to reserve for me this generous friendship, so capable of alleviating the cruelties of fortune.

Frosine. You are, upon my word, both unlucky people, in not having warned me before this of your affair. I would, no doubt, have warded off this uneasiness from you, and not have carried matters so far as they now are.

Cléante. Whose fault is it? It is my evil destiny that has willed it so. But fair Mariane, what have you resolved to do?

Mariane. Alas! am I able to make any resolutions? And, in the dependent position in which you see me, can I form aught else than wishes?

Cléante. No other support in your heart for me than mere wishes? No strenuous pity? No helping kindness? No energetic affection?

Mariane. What can I say to you? Put yourself in my place, and see what I can do. Advise, command yourself: I leave the matter to you; and I think you too reasonable to wish to exact from me aught but what may be consistent with honour and decency.

Cléante. Alas! to what straits do you reduce me by driving me back to what the annoying dictates of a rigorous honour and a scrupulous decency only will permit?

Mariane. But what would you have me to do? Even if I could forego the many scruples to which my sex compels me, I have some consideration for my mother. She has always brought me up with the utmost tenderness, and I could not make up my mind to cause her any displeasure. Treat, transact with her; use all your means to gain her mind. You may say and do whatever you like, I give you full power; and if nothing is wanting but to declare myself in your favour, I am willing, myself, to make to her the avowal of all that I feel for you.

Cléante. Frosine, dear Frosine, will you try to serve us?

Frosine. Upon my word, need you ask? I should like it with all my heart. You know that, naturally, I am kind-hearted enough. Heaven has not given me a heart of iron, and I have only too much inclination for rendering little services when I see people who love each other in all decency and honour. What can we do in this matter?

Cléante. Pray consider a little.

Mariane. Give us some advice.

Elise. Invent some means of undoing what you have done.

Frosine. That is difficult enough. (*To Mariane.*) As for your mother, she is not altogether unreasonable, and we might perhaps prevail upon her and induce her to transfer to the son the gift which she wished to make to the father. (*To Cléante.*) But the mischief in it is, that your father is your father.

Cléante. Of course.

Frosine. I mean that he will bear malice if he finds that he is refused, and that he will not be of a mind afterwards to give his consent to your marriage. To do well, the refusal ought to come from himself, and she ought to try, by some means, to inspire him with a disgust towards her.

Cléante. You are right.

Frosine. Yes, I am right; I know that well enough. That is what is wanted, but how the deuce can we find the means? Stop! Suppose we had some woman a little advanced in age who had my talent, and acted sufficiently well to counterfeit a lady of quality, by the help of a retinue made up in haste, and with an eccentric name of a marchioness or a viscountess, whom we will suppose to come from Lower Brittany, I would have skill enough to make your father believe that she was a person possessed of a hundred thousand crowns in ready money, besides

The Miser

her houses; that she was distractedly enamoured of him, and had so set her mind upon being his wife, that she would make all her property over to him by marriage—contract. I do not doubt that he would lend an ear to this proposal. For, after all, he loves you much, I know it, but he loves money a little more; and when, dazzled with this bait, he had once given his consent in what concerns you, it would matter very little if he were afterwards disabused, when he wished to see more clearly into the property of our marchioness.

Cléante. All this is very well conceived.

Frosine. Let me manage. I just recollect one of my friends who will suit us.

Cléante. Be assured of my gratitude, Frosine, if you carry out this matter. But, charming Mariane, let us begin, I pray you, by gaining over your mother; it is doing much, at any rate, to break off this match. Make every possible effort on your part, I entreat you. Employ all the power which her tenderness for you gives you over her. Show her unreserved, the eloquent graces, the all—powerful charms, with which Heaven has endowed your eyes and your lips; and please do not overlook any of these tender words, of these sweet prayers, and of these winning caresses to which, I am persuaded, nothing can be refused.

Mariane. I will do my best, and forget nothing.

Scene II.—Harpagon, Cléante, Mariane, Elise, Frosine.

Harpagon (aside, without being seen). Hey day! my son kisses the hand of his intended stepmother; and his intended stepmother does not seem to take it much amiss! Can there be any mystery underneath this?

Elise. Here is my father.

Harpagon. The carriage is quite ready; you can start as soon as you like.

Cléante. Since you are not going, father, permit me to escort them.

Harpagon. No: remain here. They will do well enough by themselves, and I want you.

Scene III.—Harpagon, Cléante.

Harpagon. Now, tell me, apart from becoming your stepmother, what think you of this lady.

Cléante. What do I think of her.

Harpagon. Yes, of her air, of her figure, of her beauty, of her mind?

Cléante. So, so.

Harpagon. That is no answer.

Cléante. To speak to you candidly, I have not found her what I expected. Her air is that of a downright coquette, her figure is sufficiently awkward, her beauty very so—so, and her mind quite ordinary. Do not think, father, that this is said to give you a distaste to her; for, stepmother for stepmother, I would as soon have her as any other.

Harpagon. You said to her just now, however —

Cléante. I have said some sweet nothings to her in your name, but it was to please you.

Harpagon. So much so, that you would not feel any inclination towards her.

Cléante. I? not at all.

Harpagon. I am sorry for it; for it does away with an idea that came into my head. In seeing her here, I have reflected upon my age; and I thought that people might find something to cavil at in seeing me marry so young a girl. This consideration has made me abandon the plan; and as I have made the demand of her hand, and am engaged to her by my word, I would have given her to you had it not been for the aversion which you show.

Cléante. To me?

Harpagon. To you.

Cléante. In marriage?

Harpagon. In marriage.

Cléante. Listen. It is true that she is not much to my taste; but to please you, father, I would make up my mind to marry her, if you wish it.

The Miser

Harpagon. I, I am more reasonable than you give me credit for I will not force your inclination.

Cléante. Pardon me; I will make this effort for your sake.

Harpagon. No, no. No marriage can be happy where there is no inclination.

Cléante. Perhaps it will come afterwards, father; they say that love is often the fruit of wedlock.

Harpagon. No. From the side of the man, one must not risk such a thing; it generally brings grievous consequences, to which I do not care to commit myself. Had you felt any inclination for her, it would have been a different thing; I should have made you marry her instead of me; but, that not being the case, I will follow up my first plan, and marry her myself.

Cléante. Well! father, since matters are so, I must lay open my heart to you; I must reveal our secret to you. The truth is, I love her, since, on a certain day, I saw her walking; that my plan was, a short while ago, to ask her to become my wife, and that nothing restrained me but the declaration of your sentiments, and the fear of displeasing you.

Harpagon. Have you paid her any visits?

Cléante. Yes, father.

Harpagon. Many times?

Cléante. Just enough, considering the time of our acquaintance.

Harpagon. Have you been well received?

Cléante. Very well, indeed, but without her knowing who I was; and that is what just now caused the surprise of Mariane.

Harpagon. Have you declared your passion to her, and the design you had to marry her?

Cléante. Indeed yes; and I even made some overtures to her mother about it.

Harpagon. Has she listened to your proposal for her daughter?

Cléante. Yes, very civilly.

Harpagon. And does the girl much reciprocate your love?

Cléante. If I am to believe appearances, I flatter myself, father, that she has some affection for me.

Harpagon (softly, to himself). I am glad to have found out such a secret; that is just what I wished. (*Aloud.*) Hark you, my son, do you know what you will have to do. You must think, if you please, of getting rid of your love, of ceasing from all pursuits of a person whom I intend for myself, and of marrying shortly the one who has been destined for you.

Cléante. So, father; it is thus that you trick me! Well! since matters have come to this pass, I declare to you, that I will not get rid of my love for Mariane; that there is nothing from which I shall shrink to dispute with you her possession; and that, if you have the consent of a mother on your side, I have other resources, perhaps, which will combat on mine.

Harpagon. What, hang—dog, you have the audacity to poach on my preserves!

Cléante. It is you that are poaching on mine. I am the first comer.

Harpagon. Am I not your father, and do you not owe me respect?

Cléante. This is not a matter in which a child is obliged to defer to his father, and love is no respecter of persons.

Harpagon. I will make you respect me well enough with some sound cudgel—blows.

Cléante. All your threats will do nothing.

Harpagon. You shall renounce Mariane.

Cléante. I shall do nothing of the kind.

Harpagon. Give me a stick immediately.

Scene IV.—Harpagon, Cléante, Master Jacques.

Jacques. Eh, eh, eh, gentlemen, what is all this? what are you thinking about?

Cléante. I do not care a straw.

Jacques (to Cléante). Come, Sir, gently.

Harpagon. To speak to me with such impertinence!

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Jacques (to Harpagon). Pray, Sir, Pray!

Cléante. I will not bate a jot.

Jacques (to Cléante). Eh what! to your father?

Harpagon. Let me alone.

Jacques (to Harpagon). What! to your son? I could overlook it to myself.

Harpagon. I will make yourself, Master Jacques, judge in this affair, to show you that I am in the right.

Jacques. I consent. (*To Cléante.*) Get a little farther away.

Harpagon. I love a girl whom I wish to marry; and the hang-dog has the insolence to love her also, and to aspire to her hand in spite of my commands.

Jacques. He is wrong there.

Harpagon. Is it not a dreadful thing for a son to wish to enter into rivalry with his father? and ought he not, out of respect, to abstain from meddling with my inclinations?

Jacques. You are right. Let me speak to him, while you remain here.

Cléante (to Master Jacques, who is approaching him). Well! yes, since he chooses you as judge, I shall not draw back; it matters not to me who it may be; and I am willing to refer to you, Master Jacques, in this our quarrel.

Jacques. You do me much honour.

Cléante. I am smitten with a young girl who returns my affection, and tenderly accepts the offer of my love: and my father takes it into his head to come and trouble our passion, by asking for her hand.

Jacques. He is assuredly wrong.

Cléante. Is he not ashamed at his age to think of marrying? Does it still become him to be in love, and should he not leave this pastime to young people?

Jacques. You are right. He is only jesting. Let me speak a few words to him. (*To Harpagon.*) Well! your son is not so strange as you make him out, and he is amenable to reason. He says that he knows the respect which he owes you, that he was only carried away by momentary warmth; and that he will not refuse to submit to your pleasure, provided you will treat him better than you do, and give him some one for a wife with whom he shall have reason to be satisfied.

Harpagon. Ah! tell him, Master Jacques, that, if he looks at it in that way, he may expect everything of me and that, except Mariane, I leave him free to choose whom he likes.

Jacques. Let me manage it. (*To Cléante.*) Well! your father is not so unreasonable as you make him out; and he has shown me that it was your violence that made him angry; that he objects only to your behaviour; and that he will be very much disposed to grant you what you wish, provided you shall do things gently, and show him the deference, the respect, and the submission which a son owes to his father.

Cléante. Ah! Master Jacques, you may assure him that if he grants me Mariane, he will always find me the most submissive of beings, and that I never shall do anything except what he wishes.

Jacques (to Harpagon). That is done. He consents to what you say.

Harpagon. Then things will go on in the best possible way.

Jacques (to Cléante). Everything is arranged; he is satisfied with your promises!

Cléante. Heaven be praised!

Jacques. Gentlemen, you have but to talk the matter over: you are agreed now, and you were going to quarrel for want of understanding each other.

Cléante. My dear Master Jacques, I shall be obliged to you all my life.

Jacques. Do not mention it, Sir.

Harpagon. You have given me great pleasure, Master Jacques; and that deserves a reward. (*Harpagon fumbles in his pockets; Master Jacques holds out his hand, but Harpagon only draws out his handkerchief.*) Go now, I shall remember this, I assure you.

Jacques. I kiss your hands.

Scene V.—Harpagon, Cléante.

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Cléante. I ask your pardon, father, for the passion which I have displayed.

Harpagon. Never mind.

Cléante. I assure you that I regret it exceedingly.

Harpagon. And I, I have the greatest delight in seeing you reasonable.

Cléante. How good of you to forget my fault so quickly.

Harpagon. The faults of children are easily forgotten, when they return to their duty.

Cléante. What! not retain any resentment for all my extravagance?

Harpagon. You compel me to it, by the submission and the respect to which you pledge yourself.

Cléante. I promise you, father, that I shall carry the recollection of your goodness to my grave with me.

Harpagon. And I, I promise you, that you may obtain anything from me.

Cléante. Ah! father, I ask for nothing more; you have given me enough by giving me Mariane.

Harpagon. How!

Cléante. I say, father, that I am too well pleased with you, and that I find everything in your kindness in giving me Mariane.

Harpagon. Who says anything to you of giving you Mariane?

Cléante. You, father.

Harpagon. I!

Cléante. Undoubtedly.

Harpagon. What! it is you who have promised to renounce her.

Cléante. I renounce her!

Harpagon. Yes.

Cléante. Not at all.

Harpagon. You have not given up your pretensions to her?

Cléante. On the contrary, I am more determined than ever upon them.

Harpagon. What! hang-dog, you begin afresh?

Cléante. Nothing can change my mind.

Harpagon. Let me get at you, wretch.

Cléante. Do what you like.

Harpagon. I forbid you ever to come within my sight.

Cléante. All right.

Harpagon. I abandon you.

Cléante. Abandon as much as you like.

Harpagon. I disown you as my son.

Cléante. Be it so.

Harpagon. I disinherit you.

Cléante. Whatever you please.

Harpagon. And I give you my malediction.

Cléante. I want none of your gifts.

Scene VI.—Cléante, La Flèche.

La Flèche (coming from the garden with a casket under his arm). Ah! Sir, I find you in the nick of time! Follow me quickly.

Cléante. What is the matter?

La Flèche. Follow me, I tell you; we are all right.

Cléante. How?

La Flèche. Here is your affair.

Cléante. What?

La Flèche. I kept my eye upon this the whole day.

The Miser

Cléante. What is it?

La Flèche. Your father's treasure, which I have laid hands on.

Cléante. How did you manage?

La Flèche. You shall know all. Let us fly; I hear his shouts.

Scene VII.—Harpagon, *aloud, shouting in the garden, rushing in without his hat.*

Thieves! Thieves! Murder! Stop the murderers! Justice! just Heaven! I am lost! I am killed; they have cut my throat; they have stolen my money. Who can it be? What has become of him? Where is he? Where does he hide himself? What shall I do to find him? Where to run? Where not to run? Is he not there? Who is it? Stop! (*To himself, pressing his own arm*). Give me back my money, scoundrel — Ah, it is myself! My senses are wandering, and I do not know where I am, who I am, and what I am doing. Alas! my poor money! my poor money! my dearest friend, they have deprived me of you; and as you are taken from me, I have lost my support, my consolation, my joy: everything is at an end for me, and I have nothing more to do in this world. Without you, life becomes impossible. It is all over; I am utterly exhausted; I am dying; I am dead; I am buried. Is there no one who will resuscitate me by giving me back my beloved money, or by telling me who has taken it? Eh! what do you say? There is no one. Whoever he is who has done this, he must have carefully watched his hour; and he has just chosen the time when I was speaking to my wretch of a son. Let us go. I must inform the authorities, and have the whole of my household examined; female-servants, male-servants, son, daughter, and myself also. What an assembly! I do not look at any one whom I do not suspect, and every one seems to be my thief. Eh! what are they speaking of yonder? of him who has robbed me? What noise is that up there? Is it my thief who is there? For pity's sake, if you know any news of my thief, I implore you to tell me. Is he not hidden among you? They are all looking at me, and laughing in my face. You will see that they have, no doubt, a share in the robbery. Come quickly, magistrates, police-officers, provosts, judges, instruments of torture, gibbets, and executioners. I will have the whole world hanged; and if I do not recover my money, I will hang myself afterwards.

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ACT V

Scene I.—Harpagon, a Magistrate.

Magistrate. Let me manage it; I know my business, thank Heaven. To-day is not the first time that I am engaged in discovering robberies; and I should like to have as many bags of a thousand francs as the number of people I have helped hang.

Harpagon. Every magistrate must have an interest in taking this matter in hand; and, if they do not enable me to find my money again, I shall demand justice upon the authorities themselves.

Magistrate. We must take all the needful steps. You said that there was in this box —

Harpagon. Ten thousand crowns in cash.

Magistrate. Ten thousand crowns!

Harpagon (crying). Ten thousand crowns.

Magistrate. The robbery is considerable!

Harpagon. There is no punishment great enough for the enormity of this crime; and, if it remain unpunished, the most sacred things are no longer safe.

Magistrate. And in what coin was this sum?

Harpagon. In good louis d'or and pistoles without a flaw.

Magistrate. Whom do you suspect of this robbery?

Harpagon. Every one; and I wish you to arrest the town and the suburbs.

Magistrate. You must, if you will take my opinion, scare nobody, but endeavour gently to collect some proofs, in order to act afterwards, by severer process, to recover the coin which has been taken from you.

Scene II.—Harpagon, a Magistrate, Master Jacques.

Jacques (at the far end of the stage, turning towards the door by which he entered). I am coming back directly. Let its throat be cut immediately; let them singe me its feet; let them put it in boiling water, and let them hang it from the ceiling.

Harpagon. Who? he who has robbed me?

Jacques. I am speaking of a sucking pig which your steward has just sent in, and I wish to dress it for you after my own fancy.

Harpagon. There is no question of that; and this is a gentleman to whom you must speak of something else.

Magistrate (to Master Jacques). Do not be alarmed. I am not the man to cause any scandal, and matters will be managed in a gentle way.

Jacques. Is this gentleman of the supper party?

Magistrate. In this case, dear friend, you must hide nothing from your master.

Jacques. Upon my word, Sir, I shall show all I know, and I shall treat you in the best possible way.

Harpagon. That is not the question.

Jacques. If I do not dish you up something as good as I could wish, it is the fault of your Master Steward, who has clipped my wings with the scissors of his economy.

Harpagon. You wretch! it concerns something else than the supper; and I wish you to give me some information respecting the money that has been stolen from me.

Jacques. They have stolen some money from you?

Harpagon. Yes, you scoundrel; and I shall have you hanged if you do not give it me back again.

Magistrate (to Harpagon). Good Heavens! do not ill-use him. I perceive by his face that he is an honest man, and that, without having him locked up, he will inform you of what you wish to know. Yes, my friend, if you confess the matter to me, no harm will come to you, and you will be suitably rewarded by your master. He has been robbed of his money to-day; and it is scarcely possible that you do not know something of the matter.

The Miser

Jacques (aside to himself). This is just what I wish, in order to revenge myself on our steward. Since he has set foot in this house, he is the favourite; his counsels are the only ones listened to; and the cudgel-blows, just now received, are also sticking in my throat.

Harpagon. What are you muttering to yourself about?

Magistrate (to Harpagon). Leave him alone. He is preparing to give you satisfaction; and I told you that he was an honest man.

Jacques. If you wish me to tell you things as they are, Sir, I believe that it is your dear steward who has done this.

Harpagon. Valère!

Jacques. Yes.

Harpagon. He! Who seemed so faithful to me?

Jacques. Himself. I believe that he is the one who robbed you.

Harpagon. And upon what do you base your belief?

Jacques. Upon what?

Harpagon. Yes.

Jacques. I believe it — because I believe it.

Magistrate. But it is necessary to mention the evidence which you have.

Harpagon. Have you seen him hang about the spot where I had put my money?

Jacques. Yes, indeed. Where was your money?

Harpagon. In the garden.

Jacques. That is just where I have seen him hanging about, in the garden. And what was this money in?

Harpagon. In a cash-box.

Jacques. The very thing. I have seen him with a cash-box.

Harpagon. And this cash-box, how is it made? I shall soon see if it be mine.

Jacques. How is it made?

Harpagon. Yes.

Jacques. It is made — it is made like a cash-box.

Magistrate. Of course. But just describe it a little, that I may see.

Jacques. It is a large cash-box.

Harpagon. The one that has been stolen from me is a small one.

Jacques. Eh! Yes, it is small, if you take it in that way; but I call it large on account of its contents.

Magistrate. And what colour is it?

Jacques. What colour?

Magistrate. Yes.

Jacques. It is of a colour — of a certain colour. Could you not help me to say?

Harpagon. Ah!

Jacques. Is it not red?

Harpagon. No, grey.

Jacques. Yes, that is it, greyish-red; that is what I meant.

Harpagon. There is no longer any doubt; it is the one assuredly. Write down, Sir, write down his deposition. Heavens! whom is one to trust henceforth! One must no longer swear to anything; and I verily believe, after this, that I am the man to rob myself.

Jacques (to Harpagon). He is just coming back, Sir. Do not tell him, at least, that it is I who have revealed all this.

Scene III.—Harpagon, Magistrate, Valère, Master Jacques.

Harpagon. Come near, and confess to the blackest deed, the most horrible crime that ever was committed.

Valère. What do you wish, Sir?

Harpagon. How, wretch! you do not blush for your crime.

The Miser

Valère. Of what crime are you talking?

Harpagon. Of what crime am I talking, infamous monster! as if you did not know what I mean! It is in vain that you attempt to disguise it; the thing has been discovered, and I have just learned all. How could you thus abuse my kindness, and introduce yourself into my house expressly to betray me, to play me a trick of that sort?

Valère. Since everything has been revealed to you, Sir, I will not prevaricate, and deny the matter to you.

Jacques (aside). Oh! Oh! could I unconsciously have guessed aright!

Valère. It was my intention to speak to you about it, and I wished to wait for a favourable opportunity; but, since matters are so, I implore you not to be angry, and to be willing to listen to my motives.

Harpagon. And what pretty motives can you advance, infamous thief?

Valère. Ah! Sir, I have not deserved these names. It is true that I have committed an offence against you; but after all, the fault is pardonable.

Harpagon. How! pardonable? A trap, a murder like that.

Valère. For pity's sake, do not get angry. When you have heard me, you will see that the harm is not so great as you make it.

Harpagon. The harm is not so great as I make it! What! my blood, my very heart, hang-dog!

Valère. Your blood, Sir, has not fallen into bad hands. I am of a rank not to do it any injury; and there is nothing in all this but what I can easily repair.

Harpagon. That is what I intend, and that you should restore to me what you have robbed me of.

Valère. Your honour shall be amply satisfied, Sir.

Harpagon. There is no question of honour in it. But tell me, who has driven you to such a deed?

Valère. Alas! need you ask me?

Harpagon. Yes, indeed, I do ask you.

Valère. A god who carries his excuse for all he makes people do. Love.

Harpagon. Love?

Valère. Yes.

Harpagon. A pretty love, a pretty love, upon my word! the love for my gold pieces!

Valère. No, Sir, it is not your wealth that has tempted me; it is not that which has dazzled me; and I protest that I have not the slightest design upon your property, provided you leave me that which I have got.

Harpagon. No, by all the devils I shall not leave it to you. But see what insolence to wish to keep that of which he has robbed me!

Valère. Do you call that robbery?

Harpagon. If I call it a robbery? a treasure like that!

Valère. It is a treasure, that is true, and the most precious which you have got, no doubt; but it would not be losing it to leave it to me. I ask you for it on my knees, this treasure full of charms? and to do right, you should grant it to me.

Harpagon. I shall do nothing of the kind. What does it all mean?

Valère. We have pledged our faith to each other, and have sworn never to part.

Harpagon. The oath is admirable, and the promise rather funny.

Valère. Yes, we have bound ourselves to be all in all to each other for ever.

Harpagon. I shall hinder you from it, I assure you.

Valère. Nothing but death shall separate us.

Harpagon. It is being devilishly enamoured of my money.

Valère. I have told you already, Sir, that interest did not urge me to do what I have done. My heart did not act from the motives which you imagine; a nobler one inspired me with this resolution.

Harpagon. You shall see that it is from Christian charity that he covets my property! But I shall look to that; and the law will give me satisfaction for all this, you bare-faced rogue.

Valère. You shall act as you like, and I am ready to bear all the violence you please; but I implore you to believe, at least, that if harm has been done, I only am to be blamed, and that in all this, your daughter is in nowise culpable.

Harpagon. Indeed, I believe you! it would be very strange if my daughter had had a part in this crime. But I will have my property back again, and I will have you confess where you have carried it away to.

The Miser

Valère. I? I have not carried it away at all. It is still in your house.

Harpagon (aside). O! my beloved cash-box! (*Aloud*). Then it has not gone out of my house?

Valère. No, sir.

Harpagon. Just tell me that you have not made free with it?

Valère. I make free with it! Ah! you wrong us both; and it is with a wholly pure and respectable ardour that I burn.

Harpagon (aside). Burn for my cash-box!

Valère. I would sooner die than show her any offensive thought: she is too prudent and honourable for that.

Harpagon (aside). My cash-box too honourable!

Valère. All my wishes are confined to enjoy the sight of her; and nothing criminal has profaned the passion with which her beautiful eyes have inspired me.

Harpagon (aside). The beautiful eyes of my cash-box! He speaks of her as a lover speaks of his mistress.

Valère. Mistress Claude, Sir, knows the truth of this affair; and she can testify to it.

Harpagon. What! my servant is an accomplice in the matter?

Valère. Yes, Sir; she was a witness to our engagement; and it is after having known the honourable intent of my passion, that she has assisted me in persuading your daughter to plight her troth, and receive mine.

Harpagon (aside). He? does the fear of justice make him rave? (*To Valère.*) What means all this gibberish about my daughter?

Valère. I say, Sir, that I have had all the trouble in the world to bring her modesty to consent to what my love wished for.

Harpagon. The modesty of whom?

Valère. Of your daughter; and it is only yesterday that she could make up her mind to sign a mutual promise of marriage.

Harpagon. My daughter has signed you a promise of marriage?

Valère. Yes, Sir, as I have signed her one.

Harpagon. O Heaven! another disgrace!

Jacques (to the Magistrate). Write, Sir, write.

Harpagon. More harm! additional despair! (*To the Magistrate*). Come, Sir, do the duty of your office; and draw up for him his indictment as a felon and a suborner.

Jacques. As a felon and a suborner.

Valère. These are names that do not belong to me; and when people shall know who I am —

Scene IV.—Harpagon, Elise, Mariane, Valère, Frosine, Master Jacques, a Magistrate.

Harpagon. Ah! graceless child! daughter unworthy of a father like me! it is thus that you carry out the lessons which I have given you? You allow yourself to become smitten with an infamous thief; and you pledge him your troth without my consent! But you shall both find out your mistake. (*To Elise*). Four strong walls will answer for your conduct; (*to Valère*), and a good gibbet will give me satisfaction for your audacity.

Valère. It will not be your passion that shall judge this matter; and I shall get at least a hearing before being condemned.

Harpagon. I have made a mistake in saying a gibbet; and you shall be broken alive on the wheel.

Elise (at Harpagon's knees). Ah! father, show a little more humanity in your feelings, I beseech you, and do not push matters with the utmost violence of paternal power. Do not give way to the first movements of your passion, and give yourself time to consider what to do. Take the trouble to know better him whom you believe to have offended you. He is quite different from what he appears in your eyes; and you will find it less strange that I have given myself to him, when you know that, had it not been for him, you would long ago have had me no longer. Yes, father, it is he who saved me from the great peril I was in when I fell into the water, and to whom you owe the life of that very daughter, who —

Harpagon. All that is nothing; and it would have been much better for me, had he allowed you to be drowned, than to do what he has done.

The Miser

Elise. I implore you, father, by your paternal love, to —

Harpagon. No, no; I will hear nothing, and justice must have its course.

Jacques. You shall pay me my cudgel—blows.

Frosine (aside). What strange confusion is this!

Scene V.—Anselme, Harpagon, Elise, Mariane, Frosine, Valère, Magistrate, Master Jacques.

Anselme. What is the matter, M. Harpagon? I find you quite upset.

Harpagon. Ah! M. Anselme, I am the most unfortunate of men; and there is a great deal of trouble and disorder connected with the contract which you have come to sign! I am attacked in my property, I am attacked in my honour; and behold a wretch, a scoundrel who has violated the most sacred rights; who has introduced himself into my house as a servant to rob me of my money, and to tamper with my daughter.

Valère. Who is thinking of your money, of which you make such a cock—and—bull story?

Harpagon. Yes, they have given each other a promise of marriage. This insult concerns you, M. Anselme, and it is you who ought to take up the cudgels against him, and employ all the rigours of the law, to revenge yourself upon him for his insolence.

Anselme. It is not my intention to make any one marry me by compulsion, and to lay claim to a heart which has already pledged itself; but, as far as your interests are concerned, I am ready to espouse them, as if they were my own.

Harpagon. This gentleman here is an honest magistrate who will forget nothing, from what he has said to me, of the duties of his office. (*To the Magistrate*). Charge him, Sir, in the right fashion, and make matters very criminal.

Valère. I do not see what crime can be made out against me of the affection which I entertain for your daughter, and to what punishment you think I can be condemned on account of our engagement when it shall be known who I am —

Harpagon. I do not care about any of these stories; in our days the world is full of these assumed noblemen; of these impostors, who take advantage of their obscurity, and with the greatest insolence adopt the first illustrious name which comes into their head.

Valère. I would have you to know that I am too upright to deck myself with anything that does not belong to me; and that all Naples can bear testimony to my birth.

Anselme. Gently! take care what you are going to say. You run a greater risk in this than you think; you are speaking before a man to whom all Naples is known, and who can easily see through your story.

Valère (proudly putting his hat on). I am not the man to fear anything; and if you know Naples, you know who was Don Thomas d'Alburci.

Anselme. No doubt, I know; and few people have known him better than I.

Harpagon. I do not care for Don Thomas nor Don Martin. (*Seeing two candles burning, blows one out*).

Anselme. Pray let him speak; we shall hear what he means to say about him.

Valère. I mean to say that to him I owe my birth.

Anselme. To him?

Valère. Yes.

Anselme. Come; you are jesting. Invent some other story which may succeed better, and do not attempt to save yourself by this imposture.

Valère. Learn to speak differently. It is not an imposture, and I advance nothing but what can be easily proved by me.

Anselme. What! you dare call yourself the son of Don Thomas d'Alburci?

Valère. Yes, I dare; and I am prepared to maintain this truth against any one.

Anselme. The audacity is marvellous! Learn to your confusion, that it is sixteen years at least since the man you speak of perished at sea with his wife and children, while endeavouring to save their lives from the cruel persecutions which accompanied the troubles at Naples, and which caused the exile of several noble families.

Valère. Yes; but learn, to your confusion, you, that his son, seven years of age, with a servant, was saved from

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the wreck by a Spanish vessel, and that this son, who was saved, is the person who speaks to you. Learn that the captain of that ship, pitying my misfortune, conceived a friendship for me; that he had me educated as his own son, and that I was trained to the profession of arms ever since I was old enough; that I have learned lately that my father is not dead, as I always believed; that passing through here to go in search of him, an accident, arranged by Heaven, brought me into contact with the charming Elise; that the sight of her made me a slave to her beauty, and that the violence of my passion and the harshness of her father made me resolve to introduce myself into his house, and to send some one else in quest of my parents.

Anselme. But what other proofs than your words can guarantee to us that this is not a fable based upon truth?

Valère. The Spanish captain; a ruby seal which belonged to my father; an agate bracelet which my mother had on her arm; old Pedro, the servant, who was saved with me from the wreck.

Mariane. Alas! to your words I can answer, I, that you are not imposing, and all that you say shows me clearly that you are my brother.

Valère. You, my sister!

Mariane. Yes. My heart was touched the moment you opened your lips; and our mother, who will be overjoyed at seeing you, has thousands of times related to me the misfortunes of our family. Heaven also permitted us not to perish in this dreadful shipwreck; but our lives were saved only at the cost of our liberty; and they were pirates that picked us up, my mother and me, on a plank of our vessel. After ten years of slavery, a happy accident regained for us our freedom; and we returned to Naples, where we found all our property sold, without being able to gather any news of our father. We then travelled to Genoa, whither my mother went to pick up some miserable remains of an inheritance of which she had been despoiled; and thence, flying from the barbarous injustice of her relatives, she came hither, where she has barely been able to drag on her life.

Anselme. O Heaven! how great is the evidence of thy power! and how well shewest thou that it belongs only to thee to perform miracles! Embrace me, my children, and share your joys with those of your father.

Valère. You are our father?

Mariane. It is you whom my mother has so much bewailed.

Anselme. Yes, my daughter, yes, my son; I am Don Thomas d'Alburci, whom Heaven saved from the waves, with all the money which he carried with him, and who, believing you all dead during more than sixteen years, prepared, after long journeying, to seek, in the union with a gentle and discreet girl, the consolation of a new family. The little safety which I found for my life in Naples, has made me for ever abandon the idea of returning; and having found means to sell all that I possessed there, I became used to this place, where, under the name of Anselme, I wished to get rid of the sorrows of this other name, which caused me so many misfortunes.

Harpagon (to Anselme). Is this your son?

Anselme. Yes.

Harpagon. Then I hold you responsible for paying me ten thousand crowns of which he has robbed me.

Anselme. He has robbed you!

Harpagon. Himself.

Valère. Who tells you this?

Harpagon. Master Jacques.

Valère (to Master Jacques). Is it you who say this?

Jacques. You see that I say nothing.

Harpagon. Yes. There is the Magistrate who has received his deposition.

Valère. Can you believe me capable of so base an action?

Harpagon. Capable or not capable, I want my money back again.

Scene VI.—Harpagon, Anselme, Elise, Mariane, Cléante, Valère, Frosine, a Magistrate, Master Jacques, La Flèche.

Cléante. Do not worry yourself any longer, father, and accuse no one. I have discovered tidings of your affair; and I have come to tell you, that if you will make up your mind to let me marry Mariane, your money shall be returned to you.

The Miser

Harpagon. Where is it?

Cléante. Do not grieve about that. It is in a spot for which I answer; and everything depends upon me. It is for you to say what you resolve; and you can choose, either to give me Mariane, or to lose your cash-box.

Harpagon. Has nothing been taken out?

Cléante. Nothing at all. Now make up your mind whether you will subscribe to this marriage, and join your consent to that of her mother, who leaves her free to choose between us two.

Mariane (to Cléante). But you do not know that this consent is no longer sufficient; and that Heaven restores to me not only a brother (*pointing to Valère*) but also (*pointing to Anselme*) a father, from whom you must obtain me.

Anselme. Heaven has not restored me to you, my children, to go contrary to your desires. M. Harpagon, you are well aware that the choice of a young girl will fall upon the son rather than upon the father; come, do not oblige people to say what is not necessary to hear; and consent, as well as I do, to this double match.

Harpagon. To be well advised, I must see my cash-box.

Cléante. You shall see it safe and sound.

Harpagon. I have no money to give my children in marriage.

Anselme. Well! I have some for them; do not let that trouble you.

Harpagon. Will you undertake to defray all the expenses of these two weddings?

Anselme. Yes, I undertake it. Are you satisfied?

Harpagon. Yes, provided that you will order me a suit for the nuptials.

Anselme. That is agreed. Let us go and rejoice in the happiness which this day brings us.

Magistrate. Hullo! gentlemen, hullo! Gently, if you please. Who is to pay for my writing?

Harpagon. We have nothing to do with your writings.

Magistrate. Yes! but I do not pretend to have written for nothing.

Harpagon (pointing to Master Jacques). For your payment, there is a man of whom I make you a present; and you may hang him.

Jacques. Alas! how must one act? I get cudgel-blows for speaking the truth; and they wish to hang me for telling a lie!

Anselme. M. Harpagon, you must forgive him this imposture.

Harpagon. Will you pay the magistrate, then?

Anselme. Be it so. Come let us go quickly to share our joy with your mother.

Harpagon. And I, to see my dear cash-box.

The End