THE IMAGINARY INVALID

A Play in Three Acts
by
Molière

an Adaptation
by
Milles Malleson
THE IMAGINARY INVALID

CHARACTERS
(in the order of their appearance)
Monsieur Argan
Toinette, the maid and nurse
Angelica, Argan's elder daughter
Béline, Argan's wife
Monsieur Bonnefoy, a lawyer
Cléante, in love with Angelica
Dr Diaforus
Dr Thomas Diaforus, his son
Louise, Argan's younger daughter
Monsieur Béralde, Argan's brother
The Apothecary
Dr Purgon

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I
The sitting-room of Monsieur Argan's house in Paris. 1674

ACT II
The same. Immediately following

ACT III
The same. A little later
THE IMAGINARY INVALID

ACT I

SCENE—The living-room of Monsieur Argan’s house in Paris. 1674.

There is a door L leading to the rest of the house and a door R leading to Argan’s bedroom. An immense armchair is C with a small table R of it, loaded with bottles of medicine, boxes of pills and medicine glasses, etc. Slightly L of the chair is a somewhat larger table on which there is a great sheaf of bills and papers, a handbell, a large quill pen, an inkwell, some counters and an abacus; beads threaded on wires, which Argan uses to help him with his sums. There is a spinet and duet stool up L, a three-fold screen up C and a cupboard up R. Upright chairs stand down RC and down LC.

When the Curtain rises, Monsieur Argan is seated alone in the armchair C. He is in his dressing-gown and nightcap and is surrounded by pillow, cushions and rugs. His stick is beside him. He is busy with the bills, obviously doing some sums of addition. He uses the counters, the abacus and his fingers. Even so he adds with difficulty. He puts aside one bill and picks up another.

Argan (reading) “A statement of accounts, due, from Monsieur Argan to Monsieur Fleuran, apothecary.” (He throws the bill aside and picks up another) “Due to Monsieur Fleuran, apothecary...” (And another) “Monsieur Fleuran...” (And another) “Monsieur Fleuran...” (He throws it down) Aaaah! Bills, bills, bills! Like leaves in autumn, and just as difficult to get rid of. Like falling leaves, you clear ’em up, turn your back—and there they are again. I don’t know which is worse—adding ’em up, or paying them. But if I don’t go through ’em for myself, then I get cheated—a bit added on here, another there—shameless. I don’t know what the world’s coming to. No honesty left. Oh, well—here we go. (He selects another bill, picks up his quill, dips it in the ink and starts) Two—and two—make four. All right so far. And five—makes nine. (He checks that on his fingers, with the counters and the abacus) Yes. (He writes) And seven, and eight make thirteen. (He checks) No. Fifteen. Oh, well, a mistake on the right side—make it eleven. (He looks at another bill) Oh! Here’s a much larger one. Now, what’s all this about? (He reads) “For Monsieur Argan. A special mixture, smooth and insinuating, to encourage, sweeten and humour the digestive processes.” Oh, very well put! Such delicacy! That’s what I like about my apothecary—his bills are so well worded. So discreet! “... to encourage, sweeten and
humour..." Beautiful! 'Pon my word, almost poetic. (He examines the bill) Hey, what's this—forty francs. Oh, no, Master Apothecary! That won't do. That won't do at all. You can put it into verse, for all I care, but that's no reason for overcharging like this. Forty francs indeed! It may encourage my digestive processes; but it enrages me. Besides, it wasn't half as encouraging and humorous as you thought. Not half. So halve it. (He scratches out and writes) Twenty francs. And that's generous. (He selects another bill) And here's another. (He reads) "A julep soporific, narcotic and somniferous." What was that for? (He reads) "To induce deep sleep." Um, I wonder whether it did. (He puts the bill aside, selects another and studies it for a moment) Now, what was this? Why did I take this? What could it have been for? (He reads) "Five ounces of cascara, two pints of senna pods, in a syrup of fresh figs." (He puzzles over it for a moment. Suddenly) Ooh! Yes! Of course! And I never slept a wink. (He tears up the two bills) They cancel out. I'll pay nothing for that little lot. (Discouraged, he fingers through another pile of bills) Fifteen francs; seventeen; twenty-six; forty-two! Oh, no, Master Apothecary, this is beyond a joke. I mean, if you go on like this—who can afford to be ill—and where would you be then? That's what I'd like to know. Out of business—and you'd deserve to be. (He goes through another pile of bills) On the twenty-fourth, a mixture for my blood; on the twenty-fifth, for my heart; twenty-sixth, for the kidneys; twenty-seventh, for the wind; the thirtieth, for my nerves. Ridiculous! What's wrong with my nerves, I'd like to know. (He picks up another pile of bills) Aah! Now, let's see. This month I had—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight different medicines; and twelve treatments—last month I had twelve different medicines and fifteen treatments. No wonder I'm not so well now as I have been. I must see the doctor about this. (He picks up a very small handbell and rings it)

(The bell makes a ridiculously small "tinkle")

Better have him sent for at once. (He tinkles the little bell again, but without effect) Dam' silly little bell—doesn't make a sound. (He shakes the bell again, more violently, but it only tinkles) They only give it to me so they can't hear it. (He shakes more violently, without effect) Not that they'd come if they did. (Now each time he rings, it is more and more violently and furiously, until it is to the limit of his strength) I might be dying for all they know. (Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle) I rather believe I am. (Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle) I could easily die of rage! (He suddenly gives an ear-splitting yell of uncontrollable anger, hurls the little bell away from him, and collapses, panting, into the depths of his great chair. His panting dies into silence, and for a moment he lies there quite still, then he begins to stir into life again. He struggles into a half-sitting position and looks round. The offending little bell is hopelessly out of reach, so he calls out, but very, very feebly, indeed only just audibly)
Hullo. (He struggles up a bit more, and calls a bit louder) Hullo! (He suddenly sits bolt upright and lets out a stentorian bellow) Hullo!

(In the distance, but so it can be clearly heard, a female voice answers)

TOINETTE (off l; calling) Hullo?
ARGAN (shouting) Come quick. I’m dying!
TOINETTE (off) Dying?
ARGAN (shouting) When I can get my hands on you, I’ll give you what for.
TOINETTE (off) What for?
ARGAN (shouting) Stop talking like an echo, and come here. (He pauses) Can you hear me?
TOINETTE (off) No!
ARGAN. Aaaah! (He shouts) Come here, come here, come here. Drop whatever you’re doing; and come here.

(There is the most terrific crash off l, followed by a scream and some horrible bumping sounds, and a noise as if all the china in the house were being smashed.

TOINETTE, Argan’s nurse, and his wife’s maid, enters l and stands in the doorway. She is a very amusing, wide-awake young woman. At the moment she is dishevelled, and holds a large empty tray)

TOINETTE. Now look what you’ve made me do.
ARGAN. What?
TOINETTE. I’ve fallen downstairs.
ARGAN. Well—what of it?
TOINETTE. With your wife’s breakfast tray. I’ve broken her cup; I’ve broken her saucer—and I’ve broken all the plates.
ARGAN (grasping his stick) You clumsy slut! Come here!
TOINETTE. I can’t.
ARGAN. Why not?
TOINETTE. I’ve broken my ankle. (She flops into the chair l c, at a safe distance from him and his stick)
ARGAN. Broken your ankle. How can you look after me with a broken ankle?
TOINETTE. I can’t.
ARGAN. Oh, you wicked girl! But if I can’t reach you with my stick, I can give you the rough edge of my tongue! Now, listen . . .

(Upon which TOINETTE takes hold of her ankle, and sets up the most frightful howling)

(He yells at her) Will you be quiet?

(TOINETTE goes on howling)

(Yelling) Stop it! Will you stop it! I can’t hear myself speak.
(Argan stops speaking and immediately Toinette stops howling; so there is a sudden silence)

How can I scold you, if you make that row?
    Toinette. Scold me? When I've half killed myself, obeying you.
    Argan. Obeying me. Did I tell you to break your ankle. Now listen . . .

    (Toinette again starts howling, and again Argan yells at her)

Stop it! Will you stop it! St—— (He suddenly clutches at his throat, and is silent)

    (Toinette is suddenly silent)

(He whispers) I think you've given me laryngitis.
    Toinette. Then we're quits.
    Argan. Quits?
    Toinette. You've got laryngitis, I've broken my ankle; you want to scold—you're scolding; I want to cry—I'm crying. And if that isn't fair, what is?
    Argan (in his ordinary voice) Don't argue; it makes my head ache. Clear these things away. (He indicates the bills)

    (Toinette rises and crosses to the table)

I thought you'd broken your ankle.
    Toinette. I've mended it.
    Argan. You couldn't.
    Toinette. Oh, yes, I could. It's cured—like your laryngitis.
    (She sees the litter on the table) Ooh, what a mess! What is it?
    Argan. Mind your own business!

    (Toinette picks up a bill)

(He shouts) Don't touch 'em!

    (Toinette throws the bill down, as if it had stung her)

    Toinette. How can I clear 'em up without touching 'em?
    Argan. Um? Put the table over there; as it is; I'll go on with 'em tomorrow.

    (Toinette carries the table across the room, and puts it against the wall r. As she does so, she observes what is on it)

    Toinette. Oh! From your apothecary—all of 'em—bills—he's a nice one. And doing himself proud over you. And that doctor of yours. A pretty pair! And you, too! The three of you! The things you get up to with that poor inside of yours.
    Argan. You leave my inside alone.
    Toinette. I wish you would. You'd be a different man.
    Argan. Don't show your ignorance, girl. My apothecary's the
best in Paris; and my doctor a man of the greatest skill, and learning—what he doesn’t know about illnesses...

TOINETTE. I agree with you there. He smells ’em out, where nobody else would think of ’em.

ARGAN (pleased) That’s true; that’s very true.

TOINETTE. Why, if it wasn’t for him you wouldn’t know you were ill.

ARGAN. That’s true, that’s... What are you talking about? Of course I should be ill, but I shouldn’t know what of. When I wanted to talk of my illnesses I shouldn’t know what to call ’em.

TOINETTE. Oh, your illnesses! They’re all your little darlings, aren’t they? With their own pet names—(she waves an arm at the row of bottles) and each with a little bottle of its own—and when they’re thirsty you give ’em drinks.

ARGAN. May you be forgiven! With all I have to suffer, I think this lack of sympathy is the hardest to bear. (He sinks his head in his hands)

(The door L opens, cautiously, just enough to let in a very attractive head, that of ANGELICA, Argan’s daughter. ARGAN lifts his head from his hands, and, as he does so, the head at the door disappears, and the door closes again)

Where’s my daughter?

TOINETTE (who has seen her in the doorway) How should I know? I haven’t the slightest idea.

ARGAN. Go and find her; and send her to me; I want to talk to her.

(TOINETTE crosses, exits R but reappears immediately)

TOINETTE. She was just coming. (She crosses to R) A loving daughter always knows when her father wants her. You don’t deserve such a daughter.

(ANGELICA appears in the doorway L.)

ARGAN. Oh, there you are. Come in. I want to talk to you.

ANGELICA. Yes, Father. (She comes into the room)

ARGAN. Sit down.

ANGELICA. Yes, Father. (And very demurely she sits on the chair LC)

(There is a pause)

(When she can bear it no longer, but still very demure) What is it you want to see me about?

ARGAN. All in good time, all in good time; don’t hurry me.

Are you comfortable?

ANGELICA. Yes, thank you, yes.
ARGAN. Well, I’m not! (He throws off his rugs, rises and hurries towards his bedroom door R) Back in a minute.

(Argan exits R)

TOINETTE. A minute! He’s an optimist!

(As soon as ever her father is out of the way, the demure Angelica is transformed. She rises, hurries across the room to Toinette and speaks in a kind of intriguing, childish ecstasy)

ANGELICA. Oh, Toinette!

(But Toinette, catching this change of tone, and as she is constantly “putting on an act” of some sort, out of her own high spirits, now decides to tease Angelica; so turning her back on her, she makes as if she were busy, tidying up the bills on Argan’s table)

TOINETTE. Yes, Miss Angelica, what is it?
ANGELICA. Oh, Toinette! Toinette!
TOINETTE. What’s all this about?
ANGELICA (repeating) Toinette!
TOINETTE. I heard. And what d’you want with me?
ANGELICA. Oh, dear Toinette!
TOINETTE. Oh! So now I’m “dear”.
ANGELICA. Turn round and look at me

(Toinette turns)

TOINETTE. I’m looking.
ANGELICA. Can’t you guess?
TOINETTE. Guess what?
ANGELICA. Why, what I want to say, and talk about.
TOINETTE. Considering we’ve been talking about nothing else for the past week, I’ve got a fair idea.
ANGELICA. Well, why don’t you begin?
TOINETTE. Begin! Me begin? How can I begin, when you never stop?
ANGELICA. Oh, Toinette—he’s so handsome! So wonderful to look at!

(Angelica’s ecstasy, her young love, is so genuine and so deeply felt that it should be revealing and touching as well as amusing. But Toinette, still putting on her act, pretends to be dumb; and does not answer)

(Sharply) Isn’t he?
TOINETTE (immediately reacting as if the words were jolted out of her)
Oh, yes! Yes; he is!
ANGELICA. And his manners! Such perfect manners! Oh, but they’re exquisite.

(Again there is no answer from Toinette)

(Violently) Aren’t they?
TOINETTE (again jumping to it in sudden violent agreement) Oh, yes. Yes, they are!

ANGELICA. And his bearing! The way he holds himself! With such a manly grace! Don't you agree?

TOINETTE. Yes, yes, I do!

ANGELICA. He's every inch a Splendid Gentleman! Toinette!

TOINETTE. Yes?

ANGELICA. What d'you say?

TOINETTE. Yes.

ANGELICA. Yes what?

TOINETTE. Every inch.

ANGELICA. Noble! He's noble! That's the only word—you can't deny it. Can you?

TOINETTE. No, I can't.

ANGELICA. And passionate!

TOINETTE (taking real interest) Eh?

ANGELICA. Oh, if you only knew!

TOINETTE (impatiently) Well, go on, tell me.

ANGELICA. And with it all, so gentle; and so self-controlled.

TOINETTE (disappointed) In fact, nothing to tell.

ANGELICA. And don't you think our meeting was ordained?

TOINETTE (puzzled) Ordained?

ANGELICA. No. Pre-ordained. Arranged in Heaven—sometime just after the Creation. Set down, indelibly, in the Divine Diary—"On such and such a day in sixteen seventy-four, Angelica meets Cléante." What do you think?

TOINETTE (rather doubtfully) I suppose it could have been!

ANGELICA. But, Toinette—the one evening in the whole year when I go out to the theatre with my aunt—that he should be there; and in the next box to us; and think of such a wonderful excuse to come and introduce himself.

TOINETTE. Yes, he's got his wits about him, I grant you that.

ANGELICA. And isn't it maddening, being kept so close, and under such restraint, that I can only see him, here and there, and every now and again.

TOINETTE (thawing again) Oh, there, dear Mistress, I agree with you—it must be maddening.

ANGELICA (encouraged by the thaw, and becoming confidential) And, dear Toinette, now tell me: d'you think he loves me, as he says he does?

TOINETTE. Aah! Now you're asking.

ANGELICA. What do you mean by that?

TOINETTE. In matters of love, all men are much the same.

ANGELICA. How can they be?

TOINETTE. They are. When a man makes love—whatever kind of man, and in whatever way—why, then, as the philosophers say, "Appearance and Reality are hard to tell apart."

ANGELICA (starting to interrupt) Yes, but . . .
TOINETTE (overwhelming her) Take this from me: in the playing of love scenes, there are more good actors off the stage than on!

ANGELICA (protesting) Oh, no, Toinette, oh no! If you look close—if you look very close—you can tell the difference.

TOINETTE. You pretty innocence! The closer you look, the more your eyes are dazzled.

ANGELICA. Then how can you tell?

TOINETTE. You can't. 'Till it's too late. Who cares? I love good acting.

ANGELICA. You're wrong, and I can prove it.

TOINETTE. How?

ANGELICA. I've had a letter from him.

TOINETTE. Is he more convincing with his pen than with his tongue?

ANGELICA. No: but he told me in his letter, he was going to ask my father for his consent—so we can get married.

TOINETTE (dropping all pretence at teasing, and embracing her) Oh, my dear Mistress, I'm so happy for you. Isn't that wonderful! And you heard? Your father has something special to say to you.

ANGELICA. Of course I heard. Can it be that?

TOINETTE. What else?

ANGELICA. Oh, Toinette! Darling, dear Toinette. How does one live through minutes when one's whole life hangs in a balance? If Cléante has asked him . . .

TOINETTE. But of course he has.

ANGELICA. What will my father say? Another moment of this suspense, and I shall die.

TOINETTE. I hear him coming back. You won't have long to wait. And let's be nice to him.

ANGELICA. Yes. Very, very nice.

(ARGAN enters R. ANGELICA and TOINETTE rush to each side of him)

Darling Father!

TOINETTE. Oh, my dear Master!

ARGAN (quite taken by surprise) Eh? What's all this about?

TOINETTE. How are you feeling now?

ARGAN. Weak. Very weak—what's left of me.

TOINETTE. Come and sit down.

ANGELICA. Let me help you.

TOINETTE. Lean on me.

ANGELICA. And me.

(In their eagerness to get him back into his chair, they almost drag him across the room)

ARGAN. Hi! Not so fast! What's all this hurry?

(So the girls slow up a little)
TOINETTE (with great concern) That’s right. Gently does it!
ANGELICA. Careful!

(And so they reach his great chair)

TOINETTE (lowering him into it) Hold on to me.
ANGELICA. And me.

(ARGAN gets into the chair. The girls continue to fuss over him)

TOINETTE. Let’s make you comfortable.
ANGELICA (with a rug) Put this over you.
TOINETTE. To keep you warm.
ANGELICA. Now let’s tuck you in.
TOINETTE (putting a cushion under his arm) This for your arm.
ANGELICA doing the same This for the other one.
TOINETTE. This for your head.
ANGELICA. Another for your feet.
ARGAN (when he has been made thus comfortable) Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear—I really must have a rest. I think I’ll take a nap.
ANGELICA (horrified) A nap!
ARGAN (repeating) A nap! (He closes his eyes)

(The two girls regard each other, over him, in sudden despair)

TOINETTE. We’ve overdone it!
ANGELICA. I shall go mad!
ARGAN. I can’t have you chattering here. Be off—the two of you.
ANGELICA. But, Father—you’re not going to sleep?
ARGAN. That’s the idea.
TOINETTE. You can’t.
ARGAN. Can’t I? When you clear out, I’ll have a dam’ good try.

TOINETTE. But you mustn’t!
ARGAN. Mustn’t! And why not, pray?
TOINETTE. The doctor said so.
ARGAN (opening his eyes, and taking notice) The doctor?
TOINETTE. He said you weren’t to sleep in the daytime. And, especially, not when you wanted to.
ARGAN. Why ever not?
TOINETTE. It’s very dangerous.
ARGAN. Dangerous?
TOINETTE. You might never wake up.
ARGAN (horrified) Never wake up!
TOINETTE. That’s what the doctor said—I heard him telling you.
ARGAN. I don’t remember.

TOINETTE (apparently in a great state) Oh, you poor man! Oh, Miss Angelica, your poor dear father! His memory’s going!
ARGAN. Eh?
TOINETTE. Now, don’t be frightened. Try and sit up a bit.  
(And she drags him up into a sitting position)
ANGELICA. Father, you had something to say to me.
ARGAN (getting confused) Something to say to you?
TOINETTE. Yes. Something important. What was it?
ARGAN (terrified; to Angelica) She’s quite right. My memory’s going. I can’t remember.
TOINETTE. God help us all!
ANGELICA. But you sent for me.
ARGAN. I sent for you.
ANGELICA. Yes.

(ARGAN stares at Angelica for a moment)

ARGAN (suddenly) Oh, yes! I’ve got it! Thank God, it’s all come back. Of course, of course! Oh, what a fright you gave me.
ANGELICA. Father! Well?
ARGAN. Yes—I’ve news for you.
ANGELICA (hardly able to gasp out the word) News?
ARGAN. You have been asked in marriage.

(For the moment Angelica cannot speak; it is all she can do to prevent herself shouting for joy)

TOINETTE. No! Well! Who’d have thought it. Oh, no. I don’t believe it, you’re making it up.
ARGAN (livid; shouting at her) I’m not making it up.
ANGELICA. Asked in marriage! (And out of sheer relief and joy, she breaks into a laugh)
ARGAN. You laugh! You like the idea. Find it amusing! Oh, well, you’re growing up—it’s only natural. So you’re pleased?
ANGELICA. Father, even if I wasn’t, I’m your daughter, I should obey you.
ARGAN. I should hope so! I’d see to that! Still, I’m glad you’re pleased. It makes it easier for me.
TOINETTE. For you?
ARGAN (to Angelica) Your stepmother was against it; wanted to make a nun of you.
ANGELICA. A nun?
ARGAN. Send you to a convent. You, and your little sister.
ANGELICA. But why?
TOINETTE (knowingly) No doubt she had her reasons.
ARGAN. But I put my foot down. And to stop any unpleasantness, I’ve arranged to have you married as soon as possible.
TOINETTE. Oh, dear Monsieur Argan, this is the best, the wisest thing you’ve ever done. Oh, I’m so proud of you. Now, what can I do for you—what about a little drop of medicine?
ARGAN. Medicine? What for?
TOINETTE. To celebrate.
ARGAN. Which?
TOINETTE. The nastiest.
ARGAN. Eh?
TOINETTE. You always say that does you the most good.
ANGELICA. No. Give him the nicest—and a double dose. Oh, Father—I'm so grateful.
ARGAN. So you ought to be. Well, that's all settled. I haven't seen the lad, but from what I'm told, when you set eyes on him, you'll be well satisfied.
ANGELICA (thoughtlessly) Oh, yes, I shall! I shall!

(At which Toinette begins to make violent signs of caution to her, behind Argan's back)

ARGAN. You seem very certain. How can you be so sure? (Then he catches the signs, and looks from one to the other of the girls) What's all this? What's going on? And now, young lady, perhaps you'll tell me why you're so sure you'll be "well satisfied"?
ANGELICA (haltingly) Well—you see, Father—it's like this. Recently—and quite by chance—we met.
ARGAN. You've met?
TOINETTE. In company.
ARGAN. Hold your tongue! What happened?
ANGELICA. Nothing.
ARGAN. Nothing?
ANGELICA. We looked at one another.
ARGAN. Didn't you speak? Did neither say a word?
ANGELICA. Only a very few.
ARGAN. What kind of words.
ANGELICA. A greeting, and good-bye.
ARGAN. I see no harm in that. I'm glad you liked the look of him. They say he's handsome.
ANGELICA (ecstatic again) I've never seen a man who's half so handsome!
ARGAN. And clever with it.
ANGELICA. I've never known a man who's half so clever.
ARGAN. He seems to have made an impression. But for once you're right. He must be clever to talk Latin and Greek.
ANGELICA. Latin and Greek?
ARGAN. Yes.
ANGELICA. He never told me that.
ARGAN. You surprise me! You meet—in company; look at one another; say "How are you" and "Good-bye"—and he never told you he spoke Latin and Greek. Still, you might have guessed.
ANGELICA. Guessed?
ARGAN. If he's just taken his doctor's degree—he must know Latin and Greek.
ANGELICA. Doctor's degree?
ARGAN. Yes.
ANGELICA. A doctor?
ARGAN. Yes.
ANGELICA. Father—are you sure?
ARGAN. Of course I am.
ANGELICA. But how do you know? Who told you?
ARGAN. My doctor. Dr Purgon.
ANGELICA. Dr Purgon? Does Dr Purgon know him?
ARGAN. Don’t be so silly! What a ridiculous question. “Does
Dr Purgon know him?” Not know his own nephew!
ANGELICA. Nephew! Cléante—Dr Purgon’s nephew?
ARGAN. “Cléante”? Who’s Cléante, if you please? Cléante,
Cléante, Cléante! Never heard of him. I’m talking of the man
you’re going to marry.
ANGELICA. And so am I.
TOINETTE. I knew it. You’re not talking of the same young
man.
ARGAN. Oh, yes, I am!
TOINETTE. But who? Who are you talking of?
ARGAN. Why—young Doctor Thomas Diaforus. Son of the
great Doctor Diaforus.
ANGELICA. Oh, no!
TOINETTE. That young booby!
ARGAN. Booby?
TOINETTE. Booby!
ARGAN (yelling at her again) Will you be quiet!
TOINETTE. And let you play havoc with your daughter’s life?
Not me.
ARGAN. Not you, indeed! And what’s it got to do with you?
Answer me that? No, don’t. I’ll not argue with you. I’ll not
demean myself. I’ll not say a word to you. Not a single word.
TOINETTE. But you can listen.
ARGAN. Listen. I won’t.
TOINETTE. You can’t help it. You’re not deaf. Not yet.
ARGAN. Aren’t I? We’ll see about that! (He claps his hands over
his ears) Now you can talk your head off.
TOINETTE. Oh, Monsieur Argan! Dear Monsieur Argan!
ARGAN. I can’t hear a word you’re saying—and don’t call me
“dear”.
TOINETTE. Oh, he’s impossible! The silly old idiot.
ARGAN (taking his hands from his ears; livid with rage) Silly old
idiot?
TOINETTE (overwhelming him) What possessed you to arrange
this senseless marriage?
ARGAN. Senseless? I’ve never done anything so sensible in all
my life. And I’ll tell you why—no I won’t; I’m not talking to
you. But I’ll tell my daughter. (He turns to Angelica) Daughter! If
there’s any compassion in you, any pity, you’ll understand. I’m
a sick man. God knows I do my best to bear my ill-health; but
I need attention. Constant attention. By this marriage I shall have a doctor in the family. And his father a doctor; and his uncle. Three doctors. And they won’t want paying—or at least half-price.

TOINETTE. So you’d sacrifice your daughter.

ARGAN. Sacrifice! Oh, what a little mind you’ve got. What meanness of spirit. Are you quite incapable of taking a larger view—I’m giving her the chance to be unselfish; to behave nobly—with all the rewards of that; in this world and the next.

TOINETTE. And you not even ill.

ARGAN. Can I believe my ears! Me! Not ill?

TOINETTE. What’s wrong with you?

ARGAN. Wrong? Everything! I’m wrong from head to feet.

TOINETTE. I don’t know about your feet; but I agree about your head. There’s something wrong with that.

ARGAN. I shall have a stroke.

TOINETTE. No, don’t; not till this is settled. All right, all right—you’re ill.

ARGAN. Yes.

TOINETTE. Very ill.

ARGAN. Yes. Very.

TOINETTE. On your last legs.

ARGAN. Eh?

TOINETTE. You can’t last much longer.

ARGAN. Hey!

TOINETTE. So when you’re dead and buried, what good is it going to do your daughter to be married to a doctor?

ARGAN (to Angelica) Don’t listen to her. This is a good marriage. Young Thomas is an only son; his mother’s dead; he’ll inherit his father’s money; and old Diaforus is the richest and most influential doctor in all Paris; last year he made twenty thousand crowns.

TOINETTE. He must have killed an awful lot of people to have made all that.

(Angelica suddenly bursts into tears, and exits L, sobbing)

ARGAN (violently) Now see what you’ve done! Have you no consideration for your mistress, and my daughter?

TOINETTE (with superb and calculated impertinence) Now we’re alone, I can say this to you; you can put this marriage right out of your head.

ARGAN. How dare you!

TOINETTE. She’ll never marry him.

ARGAN. Oh, yes, she will. She’ll have to.

TOINETTE. Have to?

ARGAN. Of course she will, or else . . .

TOINETTE. Else what?
ARGAN. I’ll do as my wife has always wanted, and she’ll be in a convent before she can turn round.
Toinette. You wouldn’t do that.
ARGAN. Who’d stop me?
Toinette. You’d stop yourself. You wouldn’t have the heart.
ARGAN. You don’t know me.
Toinette. Oh, yes, I do; and strange as it may seem, I don’t think you’re really a bad man.
ARGAN. Eh!
Toinette. You’re very silly.
ARGAN. Ah!
Toinette. And you’re difficult.
ARGAN. Um?
Toinette. But you’re not wicked and cruel.
ARGAN (in a rage) I am wicked and cruel! What am I saying? Get out! Out of my sight.

(Quite unruffled, Toinette makes her way calmly to the door L)

Toinette (turning) And I’ll tell you something more—if she obeys you, I’ll disinherit her.
ARGAN. Disinherit?
Toinette. Yes.
ARGAN. What have you got to leave?
Toinette. Nothing, and she won’t get a penny of it.

(ARGAN, beside himself with rage, flings one of his cushions at Toinette.

Toinette laughs and exits L. ARGAN grabs a second cushion and flings it after her.

Béline, Argan’s wife, enters L. The cushion hits her and she gives a squeal of surprise at this unexpected reception. ARGAN, seeing who it is, struggles to his feet and stumbles across the room into Béline’s arms)

ARGAN. Oh, wife, wife, wife . . .
Béline. Husband!
ARGAN. My dear!
Béline. My love!
ARGAN. Sweetheart!
Béline. Pettikins! What is it? What’s the matter?
ARGAN. It’s her.
Béline. Who?
ARGAN. Toinette.
Béline. Toinette?
ARGAN. Yes.
Béline. What’s she been doing?
ARGAN. Nothing.
Béline. Nothing?
ARGAN. She does everything I don’t want; nothing that I do.
BÉLINE. That’s bad.
ARGAN. It’s worse. She keeps on telling me that I’m not ill.
BÉLINE. Oh, that’s ridiculous.
ARGAN. Yes, it is—isn’t it?
BÉLINE. Of course it is.
ARGAN. Oh, thank God for you. What should I do without you? You’re such a comfort. But I tell you this—if she goes on telling me there’s nothing the matter with me, it’ll be the death of me.
BÉLINE. I’ll speak to her. (She calls) Toinette! (She pauses)
TOINETTE!
TOINETTE (off) Madame?
BÉLINE. Come here.
ARGAN (as he returns to his chair) You will get rid of her.
BÉLINE. Well—we’ll see.
ARGAN. No. Send her away at once. (He sits in his chair)
BÉLINE. But servants are hard to come by. They’re so scarce, and they’re in such demand, they can behave exactly as they like—and make their own terms.
ARGAN. Shocking state of affairs! I don’t know what the world’s coming to.
BÉLINE. But we’ve got to live in it. Of course I could send her away.
ARGAN. Yes. Yes, you must.
BÉLINE. But, of course, then you’d have no-one to look after you.
ARGAN (horrified) No-one to look after me.
BÉLINE. You’d have to look after yourself.
ARGAN. I couldn’t do that.
BÉLINE. Well—there you are.

(TOINETTE appears in the doorway L)

TOINETTE. Madame called?
BÉLINE (going to her) Now what’s all this about?
TOINETTE (wide-eyed innocence; butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth) Madame? What’s what about?
BÉLINE. You’ve upset your master.
TOINETTE. Upset the master?
BÉLINE. Yes.
TOINETTE. Me?
BÉLINE. Yes, you.
TOINETTE. Oh, no, there’s some mistake. It was the breakfast tray.
BÉLINE. He’s very angry.
TOINETTE (becoming tearful) I don’t know why he should be. I do my best for him.
ARGAN (from his chair; cupping his ear with his hand, towards her) What’s she say? I can’t hear. I bet she’s telling a whole lot of lies.
TOINETTE. He's been in one of his moods.
BÉLINE. But what's been happening?
ARGAN. Speak up, girl; speak up!
TOINETTE (moving nearer Béline, and deliberately dropping her voice)
Well, first—he told me how he intended to give his eldest daughter in marriage to young Thomas, son of the great Dr Diaforus.
BÉLINE. Yes?
TOINETTE. And I also ventured to say I thought it would be better to send her to a convent.
BÉLINE. What did he say to that?
TOINETTE. He didn't like it. And when I reminded him that that was what you wanted, he flew into a rage.
ARGAN. What's she saying?
BÉLINE. That she's very sorry, Pettikins; and she'll never be rude to you again.
ARGAN. I'm glad to hear it. Never—not till the next time.
BÉLINE (moving to him) Now don't be naughty. Oh, you are in a pickle. Let's straighten you out a bit. (She arranges his rug over him) And look at your night-cap!
ARGAN. I can't. I haven't got eyes in the top of my head.
BÉLINE. Put it on properly. Pull it down over your forehead. Further. Further.

(ARGAN pulls it down, so that it is over his ears)

That's better. It's the way to catch a cold—letting the air in through the ears. (She picks up one of the cushions he has thrown on the floor) Sit up a moment. (She puts it behind his back) There! That to keep your back comfortable. (She puts something over his legs) That to keep your feet warm. (She turns away from him to pick up something else)

TOINETTE (who has picked up the second cushion he threw, now puts it over his face) And this to keep your mouth shut.

(TOINETTE runs out L.
ARGAN leaps up with a yell)

BÉLINE. What is it now?
ARGAN (pointing after Toinette) She wants to kill me!
BÉLINE. Kill you?
ARGAN. Suffocate me! Smother me to death!
BÉLINE. You mustn't let yourself get so excited. It's very bad for you.
ARGAN. Yes. Yes—it is.
BÉLINE. You haven't the strength.
ARGAN. No, no—I haven't.
BÉLINE. A great baby—that's what you are; throwing your things about. (Making him comfortable again) But what a darling baby.
ARGAN. Oh, my dear love—you’re very good to me. What can I do for you?
BÉLÎNE. Nothing. Just be yourself. There’s nothing I want from you other than that. And well you know it. Don’t you?
ARGAN. Yes. Yes, I do.
BÉLÎNE. And you’re not to worry.
ARGAN. No.
BÉLÎNE. Not about anything.
ARGAN. No.
BÉLÎNE. Not about Toinette; nor Angelica; nor little Louise; and above all, my precious, you’re not to worry about me.
ARGAN. About you? But why should I worry about you?
BÉLÎNE. And especially, my darling husband, I’m anxious you should never worry your poor dear head again, not ever again, over what we were talking of last night.
ARGAN (becoming disturbed) Last night? What were we talking of last night?
BÉLÎNE. There. You’ve forgotten already—thank heaven for that.
ARGAN (more and more agitated) No. You must remind me. You see, my memory’s going. It frightens me. So you must tell me.
BÉLÎNE. No. Please don’t ask me. I can’t bear even to think about it.
ARGAN. That makes it worse. It must have been important.
BÉLÎNE. No. It wasn’t—at least, not to me.
ARGAN. Was it to me?
BÉLÎNE. You seemed to think so.
ARGAN. Y’know you can die of losing your memory. I had a friend went out of his mind; and went to his death, a screaming lunatic—it began like this; forgetting things. I must remember. I must! (He is in a frantic state, and beats his head. Suddenly he stops, and looks up in a worse panic) I’ve forgotten what it is I’m trying to remember.
BÉLÎNE. It was only something that you said to me last night.
ARGAN. But what?
BÉLÎNE. You said there was something that you could do for me.
ARGAN. Yes. Yes. Go on.
BÉLÎNE. I’d rather not.
ARGAN. Go on.
BÉLÎNE. You said . . . But never mind.
ARGAN. What did I say?
BÉLÎNE. You said you wanted to make a new Will—and leave everything to me.
ARGAN. Ah, yes! Of course, of course—and I told you, you must find a clever lawyer—do you remember?
BÉLÎNE. Yes.
ARGAN. And, my dear, you must; and sometime soon.
BÉLÎNE. I have!
ARGAN (surprised) Oh! You have! Good. Very good. What did he say?
BÉLINE. I've brought him back with me.
ARGAN. You've brought him back!
BÉLINE. He's here.
ARGAN. Here? Where?
BÉLINE. Just outside the door.
ARGAN. Oh! Bring him in.

(BÉLINE goes to the door L, opens it, and speaks out of it)

BÉLINE. Monsieur Bonnefoy.
BONNEFOY (off) Madame.
BÉLINE. Please come in.

(MONSIEUR BONNEFOY enters L)

ARGAN (from his chair) Come in, come in. Very glad to see you. Good of you to come. Sit down. Make yourself comfortable. My wife tells me you're a very clever lawyer.

(BONNEFOY sits on the chair LC and inclines his head. BÉLINE suddenly bursts into tears)

Good gracious me, my dear! What is it?
BÉLINE (through her sobs) It's unkind of you to force this on me.
ARGAN. Unkind!
BONNEFOY. Dear lady, I appreciate your feelings; and so, without doubt, does your good man. But you must be brave. You must be unselfish. We're doing this for him. To put his mind at rest. An uneasy mind is the worst possible thing for an invalid.
ARGAN (very much approving) That's true; that's very true.
BONNEFOY. This is a painful subject. Even a lawyer has a heart, and realizes that. But, for that very reason, I suggest the sooner we get this matter settled the better for all of us.
BÉLINE (her sobs lessening) Yes. Please settle it between you, as quickly as possible.
BONNEFOY. That's well said. (He turns to Argan) Now, Monsieur Argan. This morning your wife called on me, and told me—very diffidently—if I may say so—but at the same time—if I may hazard a guess—interpreting your wishes very faithfully, that you desire to make a final Will, leaving everything to her.

(BÉLINE gives a sob; but pulls herself together)

ARGAN. Yes. That is so.
BONNEFOY. That raises a problem.
ARGAN. Eh?
BONNEFOY. You have, I understand, two daughters living, by a former marriage.
ARGAN. I have.
BONNEFOY. Now, while they are alive, and unless in some way they were to have renounced their rights, it isn't possible to make a Will, leaving everything to your good lady.

ARGAN. Isn't possible? Why not?

BONNEFOY. It's against the law.

ARGAN. I don't believe it. I want another opinion.

BÉLINE (bursting into sobs again) Oh, no, no, no—not another opinion. Things would drag on. If you can't leave me anything, what does it matter? I don't want your money, while I've got you; and when you go (more sobbing) I don't care what happens to me.

ARGAN (distressed) This is terrible.

BONNEFOY. If I may say so, Monsieur Argan, I think your wife unquestionably right. Another opinion would inevitably mean that you would never be able to leave your money as you desire—all to your wife.

ARGAN. Outrageous!

BÉLINE. My love, never mind. What does it matter?

BONNEFOY. On the other hand——

ARGAN. Eh?

BONNEFOY. —I'm here to help you, not to obstruct.

ARGAN. Go on.

BONNEFOY. In our profession, monsieur, there are a certain few... whose respect for the law is quite immeasurable; whose knowledge of it is encyclopaedic—men of honour and integrity...

BÉLINE (tear-stained) Of whom Monsieur Bonnefoy is one.

BONNEFOY (inclining his head to her) I thank you. (Then, continuing to Argan) For us, the law is sacred. Inviolable. Not to be touched—but it can be eluded.

ARGAN. "Eluded"?

BONNEFOY. Let me enlarge. When we are confronted with the law's great edifice—majestic; immovable—there, rising in front of us, across the very path that we, and some distinguished client, may wish to travel—do we run our heads against it? By no means! First we bow, to show our respect; then, find our way round, over, or under it.

ARGAN (delighted; to his wife) Right as usual, sweetheart—a great lawyer.

BONNEFOY. Now to my point. Since you are unable—as I have explained—to leave all your money to your wife on your decease—well, what of it? You give it to her now!

ARGAN (taken aback) Now?

BONNEFOY. A Deed of Gift.

ARGAN (uncertainly) "A Deed of Gift"! This wants thinking over.

BONNEFOY (producing some documents) There is, I put it to you, nothing that wants thinking over. Nothing at all. You can proceed, if you prefer it so, step by step. You can give your wife now, if you care to, some trifling sum.
(Argan grunts and Béline whimpers)

Or a considerable sum.

(Argan grunts more doubtfully; and Béline sobs)

Or everything.

(Argan grunts much more doubtfully; and Béline bursts into a flood of tears)

Béline. Oh, no. No. No. It's more than I can bear. (A crescendo of despair) I'd rather follow you into the next world, to care for you there, as I have done in this.

Argan. My dear love! (To Bonnefoy) Did you ever hear anything like it?

Bonnefoy. Never.

Argan. Isn't it extraordinary, the way she loves me.

Bonnefoy. Quite extraordinary!

Argan (beginning to break down himself) I find it deeply touching. Such utter devotion! (He begins to blubber)

Béline (clinging to him) Dear husband.

Argan (clinging to her) Dear wife!

(And they both break down and howl. Bonnefoy gets up, and walks about)

Bonnefoy. My dear good people. These tears are unreasonable. Such grief is premature. And please consider this—

(They quieten themselves, and turn their tear-stained faces to him)

—if the bare thought of death should be a cause for weeping, the human race would cry from dawn to night. And every living moment would be bathed in tears. No. We must keep dry eyes; clear heads; and make proper provision for the future. Mourn when the time arrives; and not before; and not for too long after.

Argan (to his wife) This fellow's common-sense should shame the two of us. "Proper provision". Yes. Now, let me think. In my bedroom, under the bed, in a locked box, I've twenty thousand francs.

Béline. No. No. I beg you, keep it. I'll not take it from you. How much did you say?

Argan. Twenty thousand. And in the wardrobe are two bills payable to bearer.

Béline. I couldn't bear to touch them. How much are they worth?

Argan. One's for four thousand francs, the other for six. Come with me. (He begins to get out of his chair)

(Béline and Bonnefoy help Argan to rise)

I'll show you where they are. (To Bonnefoy) Bring your documents. I'll sign the Deed of Gift.
(Argan exits to his bedroom. Béline and Bonnefoy follow to the door)

BONNEFOY (to Béline) Congratulations. Béline. I'm in your debt.
BONNEFOY. We can arrange that later.

(They look at each other and Bonnefoy takes Béline's hand, but Argan's voice breaks in)

ARGAN (off; shouting impatiently) Hey, where have you got to? Come and help me with the wardrobe door.

Béline and Bonnefoy exit to the bedroom. As they do so, the door l opens.

TOINETTE and ANGELICA enter l. ToinetTE has a duster or floor cloth in her hand. As the bedroom door shuts, ToinetTE, first turning to Angelica, finger to lips, to enjoin silence, begins to tiptoe with the utmost caution across the room. Angelica follows with equal caution. When they are half-way towards the bedroom door—

the Curtain falls
ACT II

SCENE—The same. Immediately following.

When the Curtain rises, TOINETTE is on her knees with her eye to the keyhole of the bedroom door. ANGELICA is beside her.

TOINETTE. Yes, it’s the lawyer. They’re up to no good.
ANGELICA. Toinette, what am I to do?
TOINETTE. Ah, there you have me. It’s no good pretending it’s going to be easy for you. You’ve got to go very carefully. They’re both against you. Your father’s obstinate; and your stepmother’s much worse—she’s clever.
ANGELICA. And so are you.
TOINETTE. Clever enough to see we’re in a hole.
ANGELICA. Whatever happens, you’ll do your best for me, you’ll not leave me to myself.
TOINETTE. I’d rather die.
ANGELICA. I’ve an idea.
TOINETTE. What?
ANGELICA. We must let Cléante know.
TOINETTE. I have.
ANGELICA. What should I do without you?
TOINETTE. It’s that stepmother of yours we’ve got to watch. I think I’ll change my tactics. She’s always trying to get me on her side. I’ll pretend I am, and she may tell me things. I wish I knew what’s going on in there. It’s that shady lawyer, doing the talking—but I can’t hear a word. These keyholes are useless; I don’t know why they have them—I can’t see a thing. What are we to do? I can’t go in, unless they call me.

ANGELICA. Why shouldn’t I?
TOINETTE. Yes. You go in. (She gets to her feet) Go in and kiss your father. Ask him how he is; smile at your stepmother, shake hands with the lawyer. Watch what they’re doing; listen to all they say—and then come back and tell me. I’ll wait here.

(ANGELICA opens the door, slips into the bedroom, and closes it after her. TOINETTE immediately drops on to her knees again to do her best at the keyhole. In a few moments, the door opens.

BÉLINE is standing in the open doorway. TOINETTE flops down on to all fours and makes a tremendous show of scrubbing the floor)

BÉLINE (full of suspicion) What are you doing there?
TOINETTE. Trying to get the place clean, while the room’s empty. This floor gets filthy. People will walk on it.
BÉLINE. Were you listening at the door?
TOINETTE (outraged) Me! Listening! Madame—what do you
take me for? And why should I listen to the master explaining all his complaints to you—in detail? Inside and out. From top to bottom. I spend most of my life trying not to listen. Excuse me!

(She continues to scrub the floor with even greater violence round Béline’s feet)

(Béline, quite unconvinced, but finding nothing to say, turns to the table R, picks up the inkwell and quill pen and exits with them to the bedroom, shutting the door after her. Toinette immediately applies her eye to the keyhole.

Cléante enters quietly L. He is a very conspiratorial-looking figure, with a large hat well over his eyes, and a cloak held up to hide his face. Having got himself into the room, he crosses it very stealthily and touches Toinette on the shoulder. Toinette turns and, not unnaturally, very nearly lets out a terrific yell; but manages to contain it into a squeal. She scrambles away and gets behind the table R.)

Toinette. In heaven’s name, who are you? What do you want? How did you get in?

Cléante. It’s me! (He removes his hat and puts aside his cloak)

Toinette. You! Monsieur Cléante! You mustn’t come here. You’re mad!

Cléante. I am. I got your message.

Toinette (really in a state) Heaven help us all. If you’re seen—we’re finished. They’d put her in a convent straight away.

Where would you be then?

Cléante. In a monastery.

Toinette. This is folly.

Cléante. Listen . . .

Toinette. I’ll listen some other time; not here. Not now. Get out!

Cléante. But I’m not Cléante.

Toinette. Not Monsieur Cléante?

Cléante. No.

Toinette. You have gone mad.

Cléante. Yes. For I’m not myself. And I don’t love Angelica.

Toinette. Not love her! What are you saying? Oh, my poor mistress.

Cléante. I don’t love her because I’ve never even seen her.

Toinette. Never seen her? Oh, but you’re raving mad!

Cléante. I’m her music master.

Toinette. Music master?

Cléante. Actually, her assistant music master.

Toinette. What are you talking about?

Cléante. Her music master has been called out of Paris for a while; he asked me to take his place.

Toinette. Do you know him?

Cléante. No. But if I had known him, he would have asked me.

Toinette. You’re a cool one! (She listens) Someone’s coming.
It's Monsieur Argan. Keep out of his sight a moment, while I tell him who you are. Pray God it works!

(Argan appears from his bedroom. Cléante moves quickly up L and sits at the spinet)

Monsieur...

(Argan raises his hand in a rather mysterious and imperious gesture to command silence, then commences to goose-step slowly and very deliberately, ponderously, and apparently purposefully across the room to L)

Argan (as he thus proceeds) My doctor told me to take twelve paces, up and down the room, three times a day; but I forgot to ask him which way—the length or breadth of it. Silly of me—but I'll find out today. Meanwhile, I'll take six across this way—six across that.

(Toinette stands watching Argan, but when he has gone a step past her, she shouts after him)

Toinette. Monsieur!

Argan (caught with one leg in the air, and nearly falling over) Aahhh! Don't shout like that! You startled me. You might have given me a heart attack. (After another step, he continues his reproof) You ought to know better. Never speak loudly in a sick room. Keep your voice down. Now I've lost count. I'd better begin again.

(Argan returns to the door R and starts again. This time, when he reaches the same spot, just past Toinette, she gives a kind of hissing whisper)

Toinette. Monsieur!

Argan (stopping again) Eh?

Toinette (in an almost inaudible whisper) Monsieur.

Argan (turning to her) What is it now?

(Toinette continues to move her lips, as if speaking, but does not make a sound)

Eh? What is it?

(Toinette continues to move her lips)

Speak up, girl; I can't hear a word.

(Toinette speaks with a sudden shout that nearly makes Argan jump out of his skin)

Toinette. Something to tell you.

Argan. Another time. I'm busy.

Toinette. But, monsieur, listen...

Argan. Hold your tongue! (He starts to goose-step)
(Cléante gives some well-struck chords on the spinet)

(Stopping dead) What's that?

(Cléante leaps up from the spinet and comes swiftly forward to Argan)

Cléante (with a flourishing bow) Dear Monsieur Argan. Let me present myself; but, first, let me tell you what a great joy it is, an overwhelming privilege, to meet you. And, I declare, looking the picture of health.

Toinette (horrified) Young sir, are you out of your senses; or are you blind? My master's ill—and looks it. And when a man is poorly—very poorly—it's of little comfort to be told you're well. Mind you, he eats, and sleeps, and drinks, and gets about much like the rest of us. But that doesn't prevent him being very ill. If you have any respect for age, and suffering, look closer.

(Argan sits in his chair)

Cléante. Oh, dear good Monsieur Argan, I ask your pardon. Indeed, I have been blind. All my perceptions dulled by the occasion. But now, looking closer, I can see—oh, yes, indeed—the cruel ravages of long ill-health.

(Argan is unable to suppress a little grunt of gratification)

But I see more than that. Yes. So much more—all the courage, and the patience, the endurance with which you bear it. What an example to us all.

Argan (to Toinette) This fellow knows what he's talking about. Who is he? What's his name?

Cléante. My name is of no matter. But my errand cannot wait.

Argan. Eh?

Cléante. Only an hour ago, I received a most urgent message.

Argan. Message—who from?

(Cléante looks at Toinette, who is on tenterhooks as to what he is going to say next)

Cléante. Your daughter's music master.

Argan. Her music master?

Cléante. He has himself been summoned to Italy—to give some concerts there.

Argan (rather impressed) Indeed?

(Toinette's eyes grow wider as Cléante's story grows)

Cléante. And as I am his partner, and his closest friend, he asked me to carry on his lessons, and most especially he begged me to come here. I may say it hasn't been easy—I have had to disappoint some very distinguished pupils of my own, as well as put aside an operetta I am working at.
TOINETTE (in spite of herself) Well! I must say...

CLÉANTE (turning to her) But he insisted. She was, he told me, not only his favourite pupil, but his most apt. And her studies, he impressed upon me, must not be interrupted for a day—not even for an hour.

TOINETTE (joining in) And of course, this is the hour for her lesson.

CLÉANTE. That is so. And he spoke of her so enthusiastically, and in such glowing terms, that I myself can hardly wait to see her.

ARGAN (to Toinette) Go and fetch her.

TOINETTE. Hadn’t I better take him to her room?

ARGAN. Certainly not.

TOINETTE. How can he teach her anything with you looking on?

ARGAN. Of course he can.

TOINETTE. It might be too exciting for you. You ought to be resting.

ARGAN. Nonsense, it’ll do me good. I’m very fond of music. Be off, and fetch her.

TOINETTE (under her breath to Cléante) I’ll prepare her for the shock of seeing you.

(But, at that moment, the door to the bedroom opens. Angelica appears in the doorway)

Merciful heaven! Too late! (To Cléante) Don’t let her see you.

(CLÉANTE retires hastily to the back of the room and faces up stage)

ARGAN. Daughter, here’s a young man who wants to see you. Angelica (utterly taken aback) A young man? Wants to see me?

ARGAN. From your music master. I gather it’s the hour for your music lesson.

ANGELICA (more and more bewildered) My music lesson!

ARGAN (to Cléante; but without turning to him) And, young man. Here’s the young lady you so much want to meet. (Getting no answer, he turns to where Cléante was but he is not there) Hey! Where’s he gone to? (He twists himself round to see Cléante at the back of the room, with his back to the rest of them) What are you doing there? What’s the matter with you? Are these the manners of a music master? Come and present yourself.

(CLÉANTE, with no alternative, turns round, and comes forward)

ANGELICA (with an involuntary cry) You! (She tries to strangle it, but cannot)

TOINETTE (trying to cover it up) Mistress!

(And then the two girls are struck dumb. Cléante can find nothing to say, so there is a sudden frozen silence. Argan looks from one to the other of them)
ARGAN. What's all this about? What's going on? Have you all lost your tongues? (More and more exasperated) Will you please explain!

(It is Angelica who speaks; and Toinette and Cléante in a fever of anxiety hang on her every word)

ANGELICA (unhurried) I can't believe my eyes. This is the strangest thing that's ever happened to me.
ARGAN. Strange?
ANGELICA. That gentleman.
ARGAN. Your music master. What's strange about him?
ANGELICA. Last night I had a dream. I dreamed that I was being taken to some kind of prison—it was a life sentence I was being taken to—and, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, some-one—so very like this gentleman—appeared, and rescued me. So vivid was the dream, that I woke up—thinking of him. I've been thinking of him ever since—indeed I was thinking of him as I came into the room.

TOINETTE (with immense relief; to Argan) Young men in her dreams. I don't call it decent.

CLÉANTE (playing up, with a kind of mock gallantry, though of course, underneath it is not mock at all) And I am happier than I can tell you, monsieur, to have been in your daughter's thoughts—sleeping or waking. And she can be assured, should the occasion arise, I would come to her rescue—even as in her dream.

(A sudden loud ringing of a bell, off, switches the whole attention of a rather bewildered Argan into another direction)

ARGAN (excitedly) Ah! The front door bell. That's probably Dr Diaforus, and his son Thomas. I'm expecting 'em. (To Toinette) Go and bring 'em in.

(TOINETTE crosses to the door L)

(He shouts) If it's anyone else, send 'em away.

(TOINETTE exits L)

(To Cléante) I'm arranging a marriage for my daughter; to the son of the great Dr Diaforus. He's bringing the young man here for the first time.

(ANGELICA moves down R)

CLÉANTE. I'm most fortunate to be present.
ARGAN. They're to be married at once.
CLÉANTE. Is that so? Then I'm even more thankful to be here.
ARGAN. Will her music master be back in Paris for the wedding?
CLÉANTE. Very unlikely.
ARGAN. Then you'd better come. We may want some music.
CLÉANTE. I thank you. Since I set eyes on her, to be present at her wedding was something I’d set my heart on.

(TOINETTE enters L)

ARGAN. Well?
TOINETTE. It’s them.
ARGAN. Where are they?
TOINETTE. Outside in the passage.
ARGAN. In the passage? What are they doing?
TOINETTE. Well—what do doctors do? They’re practising.
ARGAN. Practising? What?
TOINETTE. Don’t ask me. Some kind of play-acting.
ARGAN. Play-acting?
TOINETTE. Sounded like it. The young one spouting his head off! And the old one listening with both his ears. Oh, Monsieur Argan—what a choice you’ve made. That old Dr Diaforus. What a man! And that young son of his. There’s not his like throughout the whole of Paris—there couldn’t be. Oh, Mistress! When you see him, there’ll be no further doubt. The moment you set eyes on him, your mind will be made up. You’ll know your future!
(She turns to Cléante) And what a husband is in store for you!

(CLÉANTE retires up C)

ARGAN. I’m glad you realize it. Ah, here they are!

(Doctor Diaforus and Doctor Thomas Diaforus, father and son, appear in the doorway L. They are both wearing large voluminous black gowns; and the traditional doctor’s hats, high and conical-shaped, rather like tall dunce’s caps, but with brims, and black. Old Doctor Diaforus is an immense personage; and with such an immense sense of his own importance, that he impresses it on other people. As for his son Thomas, Toinette called him a booby; and it is an apt description. Behind large spectacles, whether or not he has them on, his expression is one of utter and complete vacancy; he wears, too, an almost perpetual grin, indeed he is not unlike a ventriloquist’s dummy; which, in a way, he is, with his father pulling the strings, and like such a dummy he is not altogether unendearing, but he remains always “a booby”. But, now, the two old men, Argan and Diaforus, as they are both, for their own purposes, exceedingly anxious to bring off this marriage, wave to each other, across the room, and both start shouting to each other at the same time)

Diaforus
Argan

(together)

Ah, Monsieur Argan, there you are...

Ah, Dr Diaforus, I’m so happy to see you...

(They both stop, and start again, together)

Diaforus
Argan

(together)

My dear, good, and most illustrious friend...

My great and learned doctor...
(And, again, they both stop short. DIAFORUS hurries across the room.
ARGAN clammers to his feet, and meeting, they clasp each other by the
hand. And, again, they start talking at the same time)

ARGAN
DIAFORUS (together) 

(Ah, but such a pleasure to see you.
Oh, but such a delight to be here in your
room.

(They both stop; and both start again)

ARGAN
DIAFORUS (together) 

(I want to tell you . . .
I desire to let you know . . .

(Again they both stop)

DIAFORUS. I ask your pardon.
ARGAN. Not at all. Don't mention it.

(This time, DIAFORUS, starting at once, gets a word in first)

DIAFORUS. As I was saying, I desire to let you know——
ARGAN (interrupting him) And I want to tell you . . .

(ARGAN stops to draw breath, and DIAFORUS hurries on to forestall
him)

DIAFORUS. —that the two of us, my son and I——
ARGAN (having got his breath) Ah, yes, yes. The two of us, my
daughter and myself . . . (He pauses)

DIAFORUS. —come here in great delight . .
ARGAN (interrupting again) And with what joy we welcome you.
DIAFORUS. Yes.
ARGAN. Yes.

(And then ARGAN and DIAFORUS both start talking again together.
And the next two speeches are spoken at the same time, in a growing
crescendo)

DIAFORUS (My son and I wish to assure you that we
do realize the great honour you are
conferring on us by this alliance; and
that in all matters pertaining to our
profession of medicine, as in all else,
we are, both of us, always and entirely
at your disposal.

ARGAN (together) (My daughter and I beg you to realize
that we do appreciate your great kind-
ness and condescension in calling on
us in this way. And I solemnly pledge
my word that we shall, all of us, do
everything in our power that you will
never regret this auspicious entrance
into the very bosom of our family
circle.
(And the two old boys, coming to the end of their speeches at the same moment, embrace one another, and kiss each other on either cheek. Argan collapses back into his chair. Diaforus turns to the vacantly grinning Thomas)

Thomas (to Diaforus; sotto voce) My turn now?
Diaforus (under his breath) Yes.
Thomas. The old boy first?
Diaforus. Yes. Yes.

(Thomas crosses to Argan, stands in front of his chair, and starts off as if he were reciting, which he is)

Thomas. Father! My new father! For that is the title by which I shall know you from henceforth. But how much more you are to me than my real father. He begot me—I am the fruit of his body. But you chose me. I am the offspring of your mind. And as the mind is much greater than the body, so of my two fathers, you must—and shall—always take first place. (He returns, highly pleased with himself, to Diaforus. Sotto voce) All right?
Diaforus (under his breath) Optime.
Thomas. Eh?
Diaforus. Very good. But you haven't finished.
Thomas. I know that. Don't hurry me. Warm work! (He takes off his spectacles to mop his forehead with an enormous handkerchief) Now. Shall I do the next?
Diaforus. Yes.
Thomas. Do I kiss her to start with?
Diaforus. Yes.
Thomas. Oh, dear! (Without replacing his spectacles he looks round the room, and sees Angelica. He crosses to her, stands before her, and then gives her a sudden unexpected great peck of a kiss, indeed it is rather more like "the straight left" of a boxer than a kiss)

(Angelica gives a squeal of astonishment)

Mother! My new mother.
Argan. That’s not my wife you’re speaking to!
Thomas. Oh! (He is confused) Where is she?
Argan. Who?
Thomas. Your old woman.
Argan. She'll be here in a moment.
Thomas. Oh!

(More confused, Thomas hesitates, and then returns to his father. As Diaforus is well down stage and apart from the others, all their exchanges are whispered between themselves)

Shall I wait for her?
Diaforus. No. Say your piece to your betrothed.
Thomas. Yes. (He takes a step towards Angelica, stops, and steps back to his father) To who?
Act II 

THE IMAGINARY INVALID

DIAFORUS. Your wife-to-be.
THOMAS. Oh! Yes. (He starts off again; but poor Thomas has been put off, and he returns agitated to his father) How does it begin?
DIAFORUS. Memnon.
THOMAS. Eh?
DIAFORUS. “Even as the statue of Memnon . . .”
THOMAS. Oh, yes. (He crosses, stands in front of Angelica, and starts again) Dear Gracious Lady. Even as the statue of Memnon is said to emit beautiful sounds when warmed by the rays of the sun, so I, when kindled by the burning splendour of your loveliness, am constrained to give vent to your praises.
ARGAN. Charming, charming, charming!
THOMAS (turning to Argan) Eh?
ARGAN (repeating) Charming!

(Thomas, obviously put off by the interruption, pulls himself together, and continues)

THOMAS. And as the exquisite flower, known as heliotrope—so the naturalists inform us—turns its face always towards the sun—so, from this moment, my whole being will always be drawn towards those two twins of loveliness—your eyes.
ANGELICA (trying to keep a straight face) Thank you very much.
THOMAS (hissing at her) Don’t interrupt. There’s more. Grant me, then, upon the altar of your radiance to offer you my heart—bereft of all desires, but the desire to please—humbly, obediently, willingly for the remainder of my earthly life—and beyond—to be your slave and—(he “dries up”, but remembers just in time) husband. (He turns and crosses to L of DIAFORUS)
TOINETTE. Well! It only shows!
ARGAN. Shows what?
TOINETTE. What education does for a man!
CLÉANTE. Yes, indeed.
ARGAN. You agree!
CLÉANTE. My dear good monsieur, if his prescriptions are anything like his speeches, no illness would stand a chance.
ARGAN (to DIAFORUS) There, doctor, you heard. We all congratulate you. And especially my daughter and myself, such a husband, and such a son-in-law.

(And now, old DIAFORUS himself feels that the time has come to make an impression of his own. He, so to speak, takes the floor, making towards ARGAN)

DIAFORUS. My dear and honoured friend—I thank you. And, if you will allow me to say so, it is not merely because I am his father that I admit that I have good reason to be well pleased and proud of him. (He turns to give his son a pat on the back) Everyone who has had anything to do with him realizes that he is a young man in whom there is nothing—absolutely nothing—nothing
at all—with which one can find fault. You will no doubt find it
difficult to believe; but he was never what you might call a bright
child. He never mixed with other children, never played childish
games—he never seemed to understand the rules—they were
beneath him. We had the greatest difficulty in teaching him to
read—and when he could, he wouldn’t.

ARGAN. You don’t say so? You must have been anxious.
DIAFORUS. On the contrary, I was overjoyed.
ARGAN. Overjoyed?
DIAFORUS. To fashion a figure of clay is a matter of moments,
but to carve it out of wood, or hew it from stone, takes time.
ARGAN. Yes, yes, of course, takes time.
DIAFORUS. But which lasts longer?
ARGAN. Ah! Which, indeed?
DIAFORUS. Or is of the greater worth. A tree that takes its
time in growing bears the finest fruit.
ARGAN. How true! How very true!
DIAFORUS. When I realized he was slow of imagination,
ponderous in his thinking, I knew that when he made his judg-
ments they would be weighty. And so indeed they are. Once his
mind is made up nothing can shift him. At College, he overcame
all opposition, by ignoring it. In Medicine, especially, the
accumulated wisdom of the past is like a mighty rock; my son has
become part of it. A limpet on its surface. Nothing can budge
him. He has no use at all for the ideas and theories of the present,
regarding them as he did the childish games of his boyhood,
beneath his notice. Indeed he does not so much stand aloof from
his fellows, as tower above them.

ARGAN (very pleased) And, no doubt with your immense in-
fluence, you’ll get him some splendid position perhaps even at the
Court, where he’ll have the great ones of the land under his care.
DIAFORUS. In my experience, to attend on the greatest is not
always the most satisfactory way of exercising our profession—
to practise in less exalted circles is more rewarding.
ARGAN. You surprise me! How so?
DIAFORUS. It’s very simple—when the great ones of the world
fall ill, and send for us—they expect to be cured. Thomas!
THOMAS. Eh?
DIAFORUS. You’ve forgotten something.
THOMAS. What?
DIAFORUS. The corpse.
THOMAS. Oh, Giminy, yes. (He becomes really boyish and excited
like a child, and runs to Angelica) I’ve got a surprise for you. A
wedding present. Tomorrow afternoon, you’re to come with me
to the hospital, and watch me dissect a body.
ARGAN. A body! A dead body?
THOMAS. Oh, yes. Quite dead. But fresh. (He moves up r.)
ARGAN. Ugh! (Not wishing to appear squeamish before the doctors,
he hastily changes the subject) And that reminds me. Music master!
I have to entertain my guests. I want my daughter to sing to
them. See to it.

Cléante (moving to r of Argan) At your service, monsieur. I
have come prepared.

Angelica (utterly taken aback) Prepared. For what?

Cléante. For you to sing.

Angelica. But I can’t sing.

Cléante (reprovingly) Now, my dear pupil! Please! No
modesty! For me—and I should know—you have the most
beautiful voice I’ve ever heard. As to its use—you’re learning.
And very quickly. But, as an obedient daughter, if I may make so
bold, it behoves you to show your father, his guests—and indeed
your teacher—how you are progressing.

Angelica. But what am I to sing?

Cléante (producing some manuscript music) I have it here. A
duet. No need for diffidence. I shall sing with you. And as is
well known, those that teach singing can never sing themselves.

Argan. From what you tell us, this isn’t going to be good.

Cléante. That will be for you, monsieur, to judge. (And now,
waving his manuscript music, it is Cléante that takes the floor) This,
monsieur, is a most unusual composition that you are about to
hear. It is designed, especially, for beginners and teachers who
can’t sing. It is, as it were, a kind of improvisation; and may be
sung, or intoned in a kind of recitative—a very valuable accom-
plishment. So the duettists speak, sing, or intone to each other,
as the spirit moves them.


Cléante (hanging Angelica a large sheet) Here is your part.

Angelica. This. (Utterly mystified) But there’s nothing . . .

Cléante (hastily) Nothing that you can’t manage. (He turns to
Argan) Now, let me set the scene. You must imagine, then, that
I am a shepherd.

Argan. An old shepherd, eh?

Cléante. A young one.

Toinette (tumbling to it) About your own age.

Cléante. Exactly my own age. And your daughter, monsieur,
you must imagine, is a shepherdess. Now, it so happened that the
shepherd, whom I represent, went to the performance of a masque.
And the shepherdess, as it turned out—you must realize, mon-
sieur, that such things happen in plays, seldom in real life—was
there too. She was there, I may add, under the protection of an
older woman.

Toinette. Her aunt?

Cléante. Extraordinary! Perhaps you know the story?

Toinette. The beginning of it. I don’t know what comes next,
or how it ends.

Cléante. It was indeed her aunt.
TOINETTE. And in the story, didn't the shepherd know the aunt?

CLÉANTE (to Argan) Now, as it happened the shepherd knew the aunt. Poetic licence is what we call it. Necessary for the plot. Thus he was able to present himself—and the shepherd and the shepherdess came face to face. And he saw before him, not a shepherdess but a young goddess. The masque no longer held the slightest interest for him; yet it was far too short; for the end of it meant the parting from his belov'd. And when he returned to his home, there was no thought in him but how he could see his loved one once again.

ARGAN. What happened to his sheep?

CLÉANTE. The shepherds and the shepherdesses, whom the poets write of, have no sheep.

ARGAN. Then why are they called shepherds?

CLÉANTE. What else would you call them?

TOINETTE. Master, you mustn't interrupt. Poor shepherd! What did he do?

CLÉANTE. She was so well guarded, he could do nothing. Then the Fates dealt him a dreadful blow. There was a friend of hers.

TOINETTE (recognizing herself) A shepherdess, too.

CLÉANTE. No. Something of a country bumpkin!

TOINETTE. Oh!

CLÉANTE. But with a heart of gold. And with her wits about her!

TOINETTE (mollified) Yes.

CLÉANTE. And she sent him a message that his goddess was to be married to another.

ARGAN. That cooked his goose.

CLÉANTE. By no means. For by that time, she was as necessary to him as the air he breathed. He was in love. He was in despair. And those two together can breed a reckless courage. Putting aside his shepherd's garments, so that he was, as it were, disguised, he went to the girl's home.

ARGAN. Did he? The young dog! I'd have given him what for.

CLÉANTE. I'm sure you would. But, as I told you, he was desperate. Besides, he had to find out if the girl loved him, as he loved her—and what was best to do. It is at this point that the composition, the improvisation, begins; for, from now, the feelings are too deep to be expressed otherwise than in music. (He sits at the spinet, and improvises, apparently, an introduction; after a few bars, speaking through it) And he expresses his thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears—and she answers. (He sings to his own accompaniment)

Beautiful shepherdess, I adore you—
Never shepherd was so true;
Tell me, tell me, I implore you
If you love me,
Do you love me,
Love me, dear, as I love you?

(Angelica crosses to the spinet)

Angelica (singing back to him to his accompaniment, to the same air)
Faithful shepherd, without deceiving—
If quite truthful I must be;
Though your vows of love believing
No, I do not,
No, I cannot,
Love you, quite, as you love me.

(Cléante’s accompaniment changes rhythm and becomes extremely agitato, as he sings back to her)

Cléante.
Can I believe my ears? What do I learn
That my love you don’t return.
You do not love!
Or love me less,
Love me less than I love you.

Angelica (singing her answer to his new rhythm)
No, no, dear shepherd—why so blind?
Surely my meaning you can find.
Be sure I love,
And love not less,
I love you more than you love me.

Cléante (in an exalted crescendo)
You love me more!

Angelica.
I love you more!

Cléante.
Sing that again; oh, let me hear!

Angelica (putting her whole soul into it)
I love you, love you, shepherd dear!

(By this time, Angelica has completely entered into the spirit of the scene. She pushes Cléante off the stool and begins to play a new improvisation of her own, and sing her own words to it)

The world is bright, the day is fair,
When you are there!
Tra la, Tra la!
When you are there!
Tra la, Tra la!

Cléante (singing now to her tune)
This joy is more than I can bear,
I walk on air!
Tra la, Tra la!
I walk on air!
Tra la, Tra la!

Angelica \{(singing together)\}

Cleante

We walk on air!
Tra la, Tra la,
Tra la, Tra la,

Tra la!

Argan. Really, I didn't know my daughter was so advanced
—playing and singing at sight. Remarkable!

Cleante. But I told you, monsieur, she is the most apt of all
my pupils. And, now, as the plot unfolds, and, as they love each
other, but she is betrothed to another . . .

Argan \{(with fine sarcasm)\} Very awkward for 'em!

Cleante \{(smooth as milk)\} As you so wisely say, good monsieur,
very awkward. But, as you will understand, the shepherd, of
course, wants to know what she intends to do—and we shall hear.

\{(He sits himself on the stool beside Angelica, and plays and sings)\}

Dearest shepherdess, sweet as May,
Though we love, beyond all measure,
If a father shows displeasure,
Dare a daughter disobey?

Angelica \{(beside him; singing and playing)\}

I will answer.

Cleante.

You will answer.

Angelica.

I will answer; hear me, pray;
Cupid, God of Love, discovers
Ways of helping parted lovers;
It is Love, I must obey!

Cleante \{(with some crashing chords of triumph)\}

It is Love, she must obey!

Angelica \{(together)\}

Cleante

It is Love I must obey!
It is Love she must obey!

Argan. She's a hussy—that's what she is! If she were my
daughter, I'd have something to say to her.

Cleante \{(rising)\} I've no doubt you would. And now, monsieur,
we come to the final motif; as the plot thickens, as they
say, the shepherd and the shepherdess plan together what they
are to do.

Argan. Yes—well, as that doesn't interest me in the least, I
don't want to hear it.

Cleante. But, monsieur, that is the most important, indeed
the main, theme of the whole composition.
ARGAN. It may be. But I can do without it. Good day.
CLÉANTE. But, monsieur, I understood that you were fond of
music.
ARGAN. So I am. But I only like music I’ve heard before.
Good day!
CLÉANTE. But, monsieur—one has to hear music for the first
time.
ARGAN. Why?
CLÉANTE. Why! But, monsieur . . .
ARGAN. Good day!

(CLÉANTE stands, unmoving and undecided)
I must say, for a musician, you seem very deaf. Good day! You
told me you had a lot of other distinguished pupils—you’d better
go to one of them.
CLÉANTE. But, monsieur—I’ve put them off.
ARGAN. Then go and get on with that operetta of yours.
CLÉANTE (knowingly) Aah, monsieur—there, one has to wait
for inspiration.
ARGAN. Then go and wait somewhere else. Good-bye!

(CLÉANTE exits l. ANGELICA rises to follow him)
Where are you going?
ANGELICA. To see him out.
ARGAN. He can see himself out. Where are your manners? We
have guests.

(BÉLINE enters from the bedroom)
Ah! There you are, my dear. For your own sake, I wish you’d
been here sooner. You would have heard young Thomas say
some very beautiful and eloquent things, both to myself and to
Angelica.
TOINETTE (to Béline) Yes. And for a wedding present—he’s
promised she shall watch him dissect a corpse.
BÉLINE (crossing to R of Argan) A corpse!
ARGAN (to Toinette) Hold your tongue! (To his wife) But you
are in time to hear her accept this offer of marriage.
TOINETTE. Corpse and all.
ANGELICA (moving down lc) But, Father . . .
ARGAN. What d’you mean—“but Father”? You’ve nothing to
say to me. But to young Dr Thomas—and he’s waiting.
THOMAS (crossing to l of Angelica; with a more than usually large
and vacant grin) That’s right! I’m waiting.
ANGELICA (to her father) I beg you not to hurry this.
ARGAN. Eh?
ANGELICA. Give us a little time to get to know each other—
so that—so that—our mutual inclinations . . .
THOMAS (interrupting) But I have mutual inclinations, and I
don’t want to wait.
ANGELICA (turning and addressing herself directly to Thomas) Good sir, it isn’t easy to overcome the habits of modesty that my dear father has impressed upon me since I was a child. In matters of the heart, a girl doesn’t respond so readily as does a man.

ARGAN. Bosh! You’ll have plenty of time for “mutual inclinations” and “matters of the heart”, after you’re married.

DIAFORUS. If I may interpose...

ARGAN. Of course.

DIAFORUS. As my son loves your daughter, there is no need to wait.

ANGELICA (addressing herself directly to Diaforus) Good Dr Diaforus, you are a man of learning and understanding. If your son loves me, as you say he does, and as consideration for the loved one is a great part of love, he wouldn’t wish to force me, where I’ve no wish to go.

DIAFORUS (heavily) Nego consequentiam, mademoiselle, nego consequentiam! If we view this matter scientifically and mathematically, as indeed we must, there is only so much love that can be felt between two people—and my son has enough for both—quod est demonstrandum.

TOINETTE. It’s no good arguing, Mistress. When they talk Latin there’s no answering them.

BÉLINE. There’ll be no arguing. Angelica! Your refusal to obey your father, makes me even more certain than I was before—a convent’s the place for you.

TOINETTE. I have no doubt, madame, you have your reasons for saying that.

BÉLINE (outraged) Reasons!

TOINETTE. I don’t know what they are. But nor does your husband!

BÉLINE (livid with rage) Out of my sight! Out of this room!

TOINETTE (bouncing to the door) With pleasure! (She turns) And let me tell you this—if she takes the veil, I take it too.

ARGAN. And a good riddance.

TOINETTE. And, as you know, I can’t behave. We should both of us be turned out, before you could turn round!

(to Toinette exits l. Angelica crosses to the door l)

BÉLINE. Where are you going?

ANGELICA. After Toinette.

BÉLINE. Stop here!

ARGAN (to Diaforus) I’m sorry you should be present, doctor, at these family bickerings; but they mean nothing.

DIAFORUS (who is very angry) That’s as may be! But this meeting has not turned out as I expected. We’ll take our leave.

ARGAN. Oh, no, no, no, please, please. Not before you’ve told me how I am.
(DIAFORUS, still in a great rage, strides across the room to R of Argan, and seizing one of his wrists, motions Thomas to take the other)

DIAFORUS. Thomas! The other wrist. Well, what of the patient's pulse?

(THOMAS moves to L of Argan)

THOMAS (after fumbling to find it) He hasn't got one.  
ARGAN. Eh?  
DIAFORUS. It is Durus.  
THOMAS. Yes.  
DIAFORUS. Not to say Durisculus.  
THOMAS (repeating) Durisculus.  
DIAFORUS. Denoting a Distemper in the Parenchyme—  
THOMAS. That's right. A Distemper in the—what-you-said.  
DIAFORUS. —or more positively—the spleen.  
THOMAS. The spleen.  
ARGAN. Dr Purgon says it's my liver.  
DIAFORUS. Doubtless that is affected, too. He orders, of course, nothing but roasted meat.  
ARGAN. Boiled. Only boiled.

(THOMAS ogles Angelica)

DIAFORUS. Quite right. In your condition it couldn't matter less. (He crosses to the door L) Dr Purgon knows his business. You are in good hands. (He turns and sees Thomas ogling Angelica) If this marriage, upon which my son has set his heart, is to be consummated, as was arranged, inform me at my house, before tonight. Come, Thomas.

(DIAFORUS sweeps out L.  
THOMAS reluctantly follows him off. BÉLINE opens the door R and beckons off)

ARGAN (to Angelica) Now see what you've done.

(BONNEFOY enters from the bedroom. ANGELICA sits on the chair LC)

BÉLINE (moving to Argan) Dear husband—if you'd only take my advice.  
ARGAN. No, my sweet wife, no. I love you more than anything on earth, but Angelica is my daughter, and I'm quite resolved. Master Lawyer, can you at once, and here and now, draw up a Marriage Contract?  
BONNEFOY. Indeed I can.  
ARGAN. And will you then take it, yourself, to Dr Diaforus, within the hour?  
BONNEFOY. Most certainly.  
ARGAN. Then you will do so. And you, Angelica, you don't leave this house until the wedding ceremony.
(Argan, Béline and Bonnefoy glare at Angelica, whose face crumples. She bursts into tears and cries and cries. Cléante is heard off, singing)

Cléante (off; singing)
Cupid, God of Love, discovers
Ways of helping parted lovers—
It is Love, we must obey—

(Angelica lifts her face to listen and the light returns to her eyes)

It is Love, we must obey!

Argan. There's that damned fellow still hanging about the place.

Curtain
ACT III

SCENE—The same. A little later.

When the Curtain rises, Argan is in his chair, and alone in the room. He is taking his temperature, with an outside thermometer. The Entr'acte music continues for some moments, during which Argan keeps looking at the thermometer with more and more annoyance. When the music dies away into silence, he looks at the thermometer for the last time.

Argan. Normal! Ridiculous! The dam' thing isn't working—not to be trusted. (He throws the thermometer away) Nothing's to be trusted nowadays. Nothing. And nobody. Monstrous! How's my pulse? (He feels one of his wrists) Thump. Thump. Thump. Oh, my poor heart. (He puts his hand on his heart) How it beats. There must be something wrong with it. (He feels for the pulse on his other wrist) Very queer. I can't find it. Oh, but this is the one young Thomas couldn't find—he knows his business. (He holds up one wrist) God help me! This one galloping like a racehorse—(he holds up the other wrist) and here, there's nothing. That must be very bad for me. I'm all lop-sided.

(Béline enters suddenly and hurriedly L. She is obviously very angry as well as alarmed)

Béline (as she enters) Husband, there's something going on, here, in this house, that's very wrong.

(Argan is much too occupied in his frenzied search for the missing pulse to notice the state Béline is in)

Argan. No need to tell me that!
Béline. It's something more than wrong.
Argan (still no pulse) I'm very much afraid you may be right.
Béline. It's dangerous!
Argan (stopping dead) Eh? Dangerous! Good God—send for the doctor!
Béline (scarcefy able to restrain her impatience) Husband! If you please—listen to this!
Argan. Listen to my pulse! Thump, thump, thump!
Béline. Just now, upstairs, walking along the passage, I passed your daughter's door.
Argan. Which one? Which door? Which daughter? Angelica, or little Louise?
Béline. Angelica, of course. I stood there—thunderstruck.
What do you think I heard?
Argan. How should I know?
Béline. Voices!
ARGAN. Voices?
BÉLÎNE. Voices!
ARGAN. You stood outside Angelica’s door; and you heard voices.
BÉLÎNE. That’s what I’m telling you.
ARGAN. Well—what’s wrong with that? What did you expect to hear?
BÉLÎNE. Not a man’s voice.
ARGAN. Merciful heaven! What was he saying?
BÉLÎNE. I couldn’t hear. So I opened the door, and I went in—and what do you think I saw?
ARGAN. I wish you’d tell me, dear one, and not keep asking me questions.
BÉLÎNE. Kneeling before your daughter, was a young man. Her hands in his; and he was kissing them.
ARGAN. Kissing her hands?
BÉLÎNE. Yes.
ARGAN. Disgusting! Who was he?
BÉLÎNE. I don’t know.
ARGAN. Didn’t you ask him?
BÉLÎNE. He gave me no chance. I stood there by the open door; Angelica looked up and saw—she snatched her hands from his, and gave a cry.
ARGAN. I’m not surprised.
BÉLÎNE. The young man turned and saw me; leapt from his knees; pushed past me at the door; ran along the passage; bounded down the stairs—and has just left the house.
ARGAN. What did Angelica say?
BÉLÎNE. I didn’t wait to ask. I’ve come straight to you. She’s your daughter—you must deal with her.
ARGAN (very distressed) Oh, dear, this couldn’t have happened at a worse time for me—only one pulse functioning.
BÉLÎNE. Pulse or no pulse, my dear—you must do your duty.
ARGAN. Duty?
BÉLÎNE. Of course.
ARGAN. If you put it like that... Very well—send her to me.
BÉLÎNE. She’d only lie to you. I have a better plan.
ARGAN. Eh?
BÉLÎNE. Your younger daughter.
ARGAN. Little Louise? What’s she to do with it?
BÉLÎNE. Sitting in that same room, in a corner, as quiet and as demure as if she were in church—was Louise.
ARGAN. Was she indeed? (Then, most unexpectedly, he laughs)
Splendid!
BÉLÎNE (quite taken aback) Are you out of your mind?
ARGAN. Surprisingly—with all I have to bear—I’m not.
BÉLÎNE (puzzled; and in no good temper) Husband—I don’t understand you.
ARGAN. You will in a moment. First, tell me this plan of yours.

BÉLINE. Whatever Angelica is up to—and she’s up to something—Louise knows of it. Angelica isn’t afraid of you; and Louise is. You’re much more likely to get the truth from her.

ARGAN. You’re always right, my dear—but this time you’re more right than you know. Now, I’ll tell you something: I’m not quite such an old fool as I may look.

BÉLINE. Darling, I’m sure you’re not. You couldn’t be.

ARGAN. Bless you for that! Well, I had an idea Angelica might try to run away, or be up to some mischief—which, as you say, she is—so I told Louise to keep an eye on her.

BÉLINE. You did?

ARGAN. I did. To watch, and listen—never to let Angelica out of her sight. So, you see, when she was sitting there, in the corner, “quiet as if she were in church”, she was doing what I told her: watching and listening—to come and report to me.

BÉLINE (unconvinced) If that’s so, so much the better. But if she’s deceiving you...

ARGAN (indignant) Louise deceiving me! Ridiculous! She wouldn’t dare. I’ll get the truth out of her, never fear. (Then he seems to be seized by a sudden paroxysm of ferocity) If need be, I’ll terrify it out of her. I’ll stop at nothing. Although she’s my daughter, my own flesh and blood, she’ll rue the day that she was born. So go and fetch her.

BÉLINE (moving to the door L) I’ll send her to you.

(BÉLINE exits L)

ARGAN (having watched her go) Oh, dear, oh, dear—I don’t like this at all. Poor little Louise. This calls for a drop of something. What shall it be? (He eyes the row of medicine bottles beside him, as if they were a row of drinks in a cocktail bar) Something for my heart—to stop it beating. Yes, I think that’s what I want! (He selects a bottle) I have to keep calm; I mustn’t get out of control. (He pours the contents into a medicine glass) This is a strain. That’s what it is. A nervous strain. (He lifts the glass to his lips) Good health! (But before he drinks, he stops and repeats) A nervous strain! (He hesitates and sets down the glass) Perhaps something for my nerves would be the better. After all, this is enough to upset anybody. (So he selects another bottle and glass, and pours another dose) I won’t be able to handle this, if I allow my nerves to get the better of me. (So, now, he has the two filled glasses in front of him) Now—which shall it be? I think nerves. (He drinks the dose) Ah! Here she comes. (He gulps down the other one, too)

(YOUNG LOUISE, a girl of about fifteen, appears at the door L)

(Barking at her) Oh, there you are! Come in!
(Louise takes just one very tiny and very unwilling step into the room. Argan does not notice this, as he is busying himself wiping the two glasses, and putting back the medicine bottles in their places. He looks up; and barks again even more fiercely)

What are you doing there? I said "Come in".

(Louise takes just one more tiny step into the room, and Argan finishes what he is doing)

Argan (fiercer barking) I said "Come in". Here, here, here. In front of me.

(Louise moves slowly in front of Argan)

Hold up your head. That's right! Now. What have you got to tell me?

Louise (after a pause) To tell you, Father?

Argan. Yes.

Louise. Nothing!

Argan. Nothing?

Louise. Nothing!

Argan (with terrifying menace) Nothing to tell me?

Louise (sticking to it) No.

Argan. Think again—or it'll be the worse for you. You have something to tell me, and I want to know it.

Louise. If you like, I could tell you the story of The Raven and the Fox, or The Ass's Skin—I know that one by heart.

Argan. I'll give you Ass's Skin. And a sore one. Now, listen: didn't I tell you to watch your sister for me?

Louise. Yes.

Argan. And have you?

Louise (hedging) Have I what?

Argan. Aaah! Watched her?

Louise (with great emphasis) Oh, yes. Yes; I have.

Argan. And you promised to come and tell me, if you saw, or heard, anything unusual.

Louise. Yes.

Argan. And have you?

Louise. Have I what?

Argan. Aaah! Have you seen or heard anything unusual?

Louise. No.

Argan (very deliberately) Today, within the last hour—within the last few minutes—you haven't?

Louise. No.

Argan. No?

Louise. No.

Argan. Are you quite certain?

Louise. Quite!
ARGAN. Oh! This is monstrous! Only a moment ago, your stepmother came down and told me she'd been in your sister's room; and you were there too.

LOUISE. Yes.
ARGAN. And there was a man kissing Angelica?
LOUISE. Yes.
ARGAN. Isn't that unusual?
LOUISE. No.
ARGAN. Aaah!
LOUISE. Anyhow, I didn't see him.
ARGAN. Didn't see him?
LOUISE. No; I shut my eyes.
ARGAN. Aaah! What were they saying?
LOUISE. I didn't hear.
ARGAN. Why not?
LOUISE. They were whispering.
ARGAN (hauling himself out of his chair) This is enough! More than enough!! Too much! (He goes and picks out from a cupboard, up r, an outsize birch rod) You're not telling the truth; you must be punished.

LOUISE. No!
ARGAN. Yes!
LOUISE. Oh, my dear Father . . .
ARGAN. Don't you "dear Father" me.
LOUISE. It was my sister.
ARGAN (stopping) Eh?
LOUISE. She made me promise not to tell you. But I will. I'll tell you everything.
ARGAN. Oh, yes. You will. Indeed you will—but after you've been punished.
LOUISE. Oh, no, no, no.
ARGAN. Oh, yes, yes, yes. You're my daughter. And I have a duty towards you. To lie is very wicked. And if I don't punish you, Heaven will. So this is something you should be grateful for. Turn round.

(Louise turns)

Bend over.

(Louise bends, and Argan gives her a single swish with the birch rod. It is, as a matter of fact, a very half-hearted and harmless swish. And through all her clothes, she obviously could not even have felt it, but she sets up the most appalling howling)

For heaven's sake, be quiet! Don't make that row!

(Louise goes into a crescendo of howls, wails and groans)

What a ridiculous fuss! I hardly touched you.
Louise. Hardly touched me? You’ve half-killed me. I think I’m going to faint.

Argan. Faint?

Louise. The room’s going round and round—everything’s getting dark—I think I’m dying.

Argan. Dying?

Louise. Yes—and I hope I am. (She stages a spectacular sway, stagger and fall, and lies on the floor unmoving)

Argan (eyeing her; puzzled) Louise!

(Louise does not move; and Argan begins to get alarmed)

Louise!

(Still Louise does not move)

(Frightened) Louise! (He goes to her and lifts up one of her arms, but when he lets it go it falls back lifeless on to the floor, then he flops down beside her, really frightened) Oh, God help me! What have I done? I didn’t know my own strength. That’s what it was. Louise! Louise! Dear poor little Louise! (He begins to cry) Oh, God forgive me! For I’ll never forgive myself.

Louise (from the floor; without moving, or opening her eyes) It’s all right, Father, you needn’t cry so much—I’m not quite dead.

Argan. Oh, heaven be praised! (He struggles to his feet) Oh, how you frightened me! (He walks away; but suddenly stops and turns) You’re not being artful? You’re not pretending?

Louise. I’m going off again.

Argan (running back to her) Oh, no. (He kneels beside her)

Louise!

Louise (sitting up) Darling Father!

Argan. Sweet little daughter!

(And so they remain for a moment)

But you’re going to tell me everything you know.

Louise. Oh, yes, I am.

Argan. Good. Go ahead. (And feeling he has scored a triumph, he gets up, and seats himself, expectant, on his chair)

Louise (now kneeling on the floor) Well! I was sitting in my sister’s room alone—and a man came in.

Argan. What sort of man?

Louise. Oh, he was young; and very handsome.

Argan. What did you do?

Louise. I asked him who he was.

Argan. What did he say?

Louise. He said he was her music master!

Argan. Aah! That fellow again! And then?

Louise. Angelica came in.

Argan. What did she say?
Louise. She said: "Oh, my God—you! For heaven's sake, get out!"

Argan. Oh! She said that.
Louise. Yes—and then she added: "If you're found here, everything is over"—but he wouldn't go.
Argan. Wouldn't he? What did he say?
Louise. Oh, all sorts of things.
Argan. What sort of things?
Louise. He said he loved her.
Argan. What more?
Louise. Nothing more.
Argan. You said he said all sorts of things.
Louise. He said he loved her—in all sorts of ways. Then he went down on his knees, and took her hands and kissed them; and stepmother came in; and he jumped up and ran away.

Argan. Yes?
Louise. That's all.
Argan. All? But I know all that.
Louise. Then why did you ask?
Argan. I want to know the rest.
Louise. There isn't any more.

(Argan gets up from his chair; and advances on her slowly and again with menace)

Argan. Louise! If you've been watching your sister as I told you to—as you say you have—you know a lot more than you've told me.

Louise (obstinate again) I've told you all I know.
Argan. Louise! (He is now standing in front of the kneeling girl, and holds out his little finger to her) This little finger of mine knows everything.
Louise. Then why don't you ask it?
Argan. Eh? Very well, yes—I will. (He puts his little finger in one of his ears) It's whispering to me that there are a whole lot of things you haven't told me.

(Argan waggles his finger in Louise's face. Suddenly she bites it hard. He gives a yell of pain, and hops about, wringing his hand)

Why did you do that?
Louise. Your little finger's wicked—telling lies. I punished it.

(Argan loses control. With a bellow of rage, he picks up the birch rod again and plunges at her.
Louis eludes him. He goes after her. She keeps out of his way, until she runs out of the door 1. Argan collapses in his chair, exhausted, and still clasping his large birch rod.

Toinette enters 1)

Toinette (as she appears) Your brother to see you, monsieur.
(Béralde, Argan’s brother, follows Toinette into the room. He is a man of immense exuberance, and comes bursting in, like a great gust of wind)

Béralde (going straight to Argan with outstretched arms) Ah! My dear fellow!

(Béralde at once seizes hold of one of Argan’s hands, and much to the old man’s outraged discomfort, nearly shakes his arm off. Then, violently, he kisses him first on one cheek, then on the other. Then seizes him by both hands and holds him at arm’s length)

Now, let’s have a look at you. Oh, but you look splendid.

(He gives Argan an enormous thump on the back, which makes him gasp and splutter, and drop the birch rod)

Great heavens, man—what are you doing with that thing? And why was little Louise running out of the room, as if the devil himself were after her?

Argan. Oh, brother, I’m very ill.

Béralde. Ill?

Argan. Weak! Far too weak to answer any questions. Much too exhausted to talk.

Béralde. But that’s what I came to do.

Argan. Impossible!

Béralde. Nonsense! I don’t believe it.

Argan (in a croak) I’m very hard of hearing—and I’ve lost my voice.

Béralde. That’s a pity! I came to propose a husband for Angelica.

Argan (suddenly yelling) The music master!

Béralde (very surprised; but hugely amused as he nearly always is) Music master? He’s certainly not that; though the young man I have in mind has many accomplishments. He’s handsome. Well connected. Rich. And loves Angelica. And what’s even more important, she loves him.

Argan. Ah, those girls of mine. They’ll drive me out of my mind.

Béralde. I think they have.

Argan. What do you mean by that?

Béralde. Just what I say. However, I’m glad my visit has done you a bit of good.

Argan. Eh?

Béralde. Well—you seem to be able to hear. And you’ve recovered your voice. And, at least, a little strength—so we’ll discuss it further.

Argan. I’m sorry I have to leave you. (He gets up, and starts towards his bedroom, without his stick)

Toinette (calling after him) Monsieur Argan!

Argan (stopping) Yes?
Toinette. You’ve forgotten...
Argan. Eh?
Toinette. You can’t walk without your stick.
Argan. Oh, yes. (He returns for his stick; and, this time, limps off.
As he goes) Thank you—very careless of me!

(Argan exits to the bedroom)

Toinette (at once; to Béralde) Oh, Monsieur Béralde, thank God you’ve come. You’ll save my mistress, won’t you?
Béralde. Save her?
Toinette. This marriage is tomorrow——
Béralde. Tomorrow!
Toinette. —and she’s being kept a prisoner; upstairs.
Béralde (really startled) Prisoner!
Toinette. If there were only some way of putting it off.
Béralde. Well—isn’t there?
Toinette. The only thing that would divert your brother’s mind is a new illness; and a new treatment, drastic and very urgent.
Béralde. He shall have it.
Toinette. Easy enough to say. All the doctors are on his side—they wouldn’t help.
Béralde. Then get a new one.
Toinette. That’s the only way.
Béralde. Can you get hold of one?
Toinette. I have a thought.
Béralde. What is it?
Toinette. It’s quite mad—but so am I. (She listens) He’s coming back. Oh, Monsieur Béralde, stay here—and do your best. And, above all, keep him in a good temper. Leave the rest to me.

(Toinette runs out L.
Argan enters from the bedroom, crosses to his chair and clammers into it)
Béralde. Can I give you a hand?
Argan. No, thank you. I can help myself.

(When Argan is seated, Béralde moves to him)
Béralde. Yes. I can see now. You’re not looking so well as I first thought you were.

(Argan grunts; not without gratification)
I’m very sorry. I should have been more sympathetic. Oh, but you’re a dear fellow; and I’m very fond of you.

(Argan gives him a look, and grunts again, not without suspicion)
(He moves the chair LC and sits on it close to Argan) And, surely, two brothers can discuss family affairs, quietly and reasonably—without getting excited.
Argan. I shan't get excited.

Bérard. And, most certainly, nor shall I.

Argan (dryly) Our conversation seems likely to be an unexciting one.

Bérard. But if I ask you a few questions, perhaps you'd answer them.

Argan. Why shouldn't I?

Bérard. That's very good of you.

Argan. Don't mention it!

(And now they are both behaving as if butter would not melt in their mouths)

Bérard. Ah, bless you—you've a heart of gold.

Argan. Gold! I doubt it. There's something the matter with it—but not that.

Bérard (laughing, as pleasantly as he can) And such a wit! Now, let me ask you this: why, with all your money, are you marrying your daughter to a man she doesn't want?

(There is a tiny, tense pause, and as the strain gets harder between them, their exchanges get sweeter and sweeter)

Argan. To get myself a son-in-law who's useful to me.

Bérard. Surely a strange reason?

Argan. What's strange about it? I should have called it eminently sensible.

Bérard. Sensible!

Argan. That's what I said.

Bérard. Forgive me, brother dear, if I seem slow-witted—but explain yourself.

Argan. He's a doctor. And his father is a doctor. And his uncle is a doctor. My doctor. And in a case like mine, three doctors are better than one.

Bérard. Ah! I see.

Argan. I thought you would.

Bérard. And so I suppose, when Louise comes of age, you'll marry her to an apothecary?

Argan. By God, a good idea! I hadn't thought of it. Thank you for mentioning it.

(Which is too much for Bérard. He leaps from his chair and speaks in a sudden gale of indignation)

Bérard. Really! You're impossible! Sacrificing your daughter to your ridiculous illnesses. You! The healthiest man I've ever known.

Argan (yelling back with rage) Me! Healthy?

Bérard. Robust! I wish to God I had your constitution. Any other man with all your bleedings and purgings, and heaven knows what else—(with a wave of his arm towards the bar) emptying
all those poisons into yourself—corroding your wretched stomach
—any other man would have been dead years ago.

ARGAN (livid) So! You’d set yourself up against the accumu-
lated wisdom of the ages.

BÉRALDE. Bosh!

ARGAN. Bosh?

BÉRALDE. Bosh!

ARGAN. You’re an arrogant idiot—you always were!

BÉRALDE (beside himself) And you’re a . . . (But he makes a
superhuman effort to control himself) No! Heaven help me, I’ll not
lose my temper. I’ll not quarrel with you. (And he begins to pace
swiftly up and down the room, as if to cool himself by the very draught
he is creating. Gradually the pacing slackens, and when he is still again
his voice is conciliatory, sincere, and eminently reasonable) Brother, each
one of us, waking or sleeping, walking or sitting, is a living
Miracle. But, like all Miracles, beyond our knowledge. And of
how the Miracle works we know nothing. Take this new theory
that the blood circulates. Does it? Or doesn’t it? Who knows?
And who will ever know?

ARGAN. You exaggerate—you always did.

BÉRALDE. Maybe—maybe, in years to come, hundreds of
years, we may have more knowledge. And then perhaps doctors
may be of use—although I doubt it. But now it’s guesswork. And
their guesses alter every month. They do more harm than good.

ARGAN. Yet when men are ill, they call a doctor.

BÉRALDE. That’s a proof of man’s gullibility—not of the
doctor’s skill.

ARGAN. But doctors trust each other; and themselves.

BÉRALDE. My dear good fellow, the great deceivers of the
world begin by deceiving themselves. They have to, or they
wouldn’t be so good at it. And, as a matter of fact, I’m not alone
in thinking as I do. You should come to the theatre with me, and
see one of Molière’s plays on this same subject.

ARGAN. Molière! Don’t talk to me of Molière. That rogue!
That scribbling ass! That fool! Writing his silly plays against the
art of medicine. He ought to be punished, and I hope he will be.
I know, if I were a doctor, and he was sick, I’d refuse to treat him.

BÉRALDE. I don’t think that would worry Molière. Only the
other day, when I was at his house, he said to me, “I wish I
hadn’t got to act tonight, I don’t feel well.” “Then why don’t
you see a doctor?” said his wife. “A doctor,” he replied, “I should
never survive a doctor—I’m a sick man. I want all my strength,
just to keep alive.”

(The Apothecary, a most alarming-looking man, appears in the
doorway L, carrying an even more alarming-looking outsize syringe)

Heavens alive! Who’s this?

ARGAN. Ah! My apothecary.
Apothecary (advancing into the room with a flourish of the syringe)
Now, monsieur—if you please.
Argan. Yes, yes. I'll be ready in a moment. Dear brother, I'm afraid I must ask you to retire.
Béralde. To retire?
Argan. That's what I said—to leave us alone.
Béralde. But I haven't said half what I came to say.
Argan. Most unfortunate! Some other time.
Béralde. Some other time will be too late.
Argan. What d'you mean “too late”?
Béralde. I came to talk about my niece's marriage—which now I gather is to take place tomorrow.
Argan. Quite right. Tomorrow. It's all settled. So there's nothing to be said.
Béralde (this time, although very angry, he does not lose his temper, but seems to choose his words with purpose) I see how it is. You're behaving so disgracefully . . .
Argan (outraged) Can I believe my ears?
Béralde. I doubt it—you're hard of hearing. So let me repeat: you're behaving so disgracefully; with such utter selfishness; with such wanton, unnatural, unfatherly cruelty, that you dare not even talk about it.
Argan. Dare not?
Béralde. That's what I said. It's not your hearing that you've lost—dear brother—but your conscience!
Argan. Insufferable! You don't know what you're talking about.
Béralde. How can you say that, when you won't even listen to me?
Argan. In front of the apothecary? Have you no family feeling?
Béralde. Ask him to go.

(At which the Apothecary seems suddenly to become inflated)

Apothecary. Sir!
Béralde. Send him away.
Apothecary (to Béralde) I beg your pardon?
Béralde. Granted! (To Argan) Put off this absurd treatment. Have it this evening, or tomorrow morning.
Apothecary. I take that very much amiss.
Béralde. You can take it how you will.
Apothecary (to Argan) I don't know who this gentleman is.
Argan. My brother.
Apothecary. I'm sorry to hear it. (To Béralde) Sir, I'm a busy man; I can't afford to waste my time like this.
Béralde. Surely you're paid for it.
Apothecary. That's not the point.
Béralde. I should have thought it was. (To Argan) Well,
brother, am I right? Are you too utterly ashamed of what you’re doing to hear me out.

ARGAN. Of course I’m not.
BÉRALDE. Then prove it to me—or show yourself a coward—as well as a heartless parent.
ARGAN (to the Apothecary) Good Master Apothecary. You hear. Some other time—at your convenience. In an hour; or half an hour. When you will. Or in a few minutes. I shall be here.

(The Apothecary stalks to the door L with incredible disapproval, and turns)

APOTHECARY. I dare not think what Dr Purgon will have to say to this.
ARGAN (appalled) Dr Purgon! But how should he know?
APOTHECARY. He’s at your front door.
ARGAN. At my front door?
APOTHECARY. Sitting in his carriage. He drove me here, and said he’d wait for me. If I know Dr Purgon—and I do—you will hear more of this. Good day.

(The Apothecary, and his great syringe, exit L)

ARGAN (in a dreadful state) What have I done? What have you made me do?
BÉRALDE. Postpone what I should imagine a most unsavoury experience.
ARGAN. But you heard the apothecary! What if Dr Purgon should be angry.
BÉRALDE. Why should he be? And indeed, what if he is? You’ve only put off one of his incessant treatments for an hour. He’ll add something to his bill—and drive away, apothecary, syringe and all, to plague some other credulous idiot. Now. About Angelica . . .

(The Apothecary makes a triumphant but menacing reappearance L)

APOTHECARY. Dr Purgon wishes a word with you.

(DR PURGON comes buzzing and hissing into the room, like some very angry wasp. He wears a tall hat and gown)

DR PURGON. Here’s a nice state of affairs!
ARGAN (petrified) Ah—good Dr Purgon . . .
DR PURGON. Don’t “Dr Purgon” me! Never, in all my professional life, have I been so insulted.
ARGAN. Oh, no . . .
DR PURGON. To have one of my remedies refused.
ARGAN. Refused! No. No—postponed.
DR PURGON. If anything, that’s worse! With my medicines, when they are taken is even more important than what they are.
ARGAN (in great penitence) I was very wrong. My brother persuaded me.

DR PURGON. Your brother is not my patient. He is no concern of mine.

BÉRALDE. Fortunately for me.

DR PURGON (darting at Béralde, and peering close into his face) Don’t be too sure! You’re sickening for something. (He turns again on Argan) No, Monsieur Argan—it’s you who are to blame.

ARGAN. Yes. Very much to blame. And I’m so sorry.

DR PURGON. And well you may be. It was a Special and Most Extraordinary Mixture—never before administered to any living thing. One of my inspirations. It came to me, in one of the long watches of the night, and I arose—and prepared it for you, with my own hands.

ARGAN (despairing) Oh!

DR PURGON. You may well groan. Every separate ingredient was to have had its own effect, upon your every ailment. It was to have cleansed your whole system—at one squirt.

ARGAN. One squirt?

DR PURGON. One squirt. I sent in my apothecary at the appointed moment, and he returned to me—the syringe unemptied, my miracle of healing unperformed—balked of his errand of mercy. And that constitutes not only a mortal insult to me personally, but to the whole Medical Faculty. You have destroyed, at one stroke, a sacred obligation—the unquestioning obedience of a patient to his physician. That is rebellion. The revolt of Ignorance against Authority. And in Medicine, as in Society, such behaviour must bring chaos and disaster. It cannot be tolerated. It must be nipped in the bud. And here and now. At once. And without mercy. You’ve brought this on yourself. I’ve done with you. And so, believe me, when they hear of this, have all my Fellows.

ARGAN (with a cry of horror) Oh, no!

DR PURGON. I wash my hands of you. And leave you to your fate. Which—I may tell you—I don’t envy you. In a short while from now, probably in a matter of hours, you will fall into a state of A-Pepsia. From that to U-Pepsia. From U-Pepsia to Mee-Pepsia. Then Drypsi-Pepsia. And from that in a condition of Bray-co-philia-Pepsia. And when the dread poison of that spreads into your every organ—as it must; then you will die—and horribly.

(ARGAN collapses)

(He strides to the door and turns) One thing more . . .

ARGAN. No more! You’ve killed me! Isn’t that enough?

DR PURGON (taking a document from his pocket) And so that this parting should be absolutely final, here is the Deed of Gift I made in favour of my nephew for his approaching marriage to
your daughter. (He tears it into pieces, and throws them on the floor)
So this is farewell! I have nothing to leave you, but my pity.

(Dr Purgon exits l.
The Apothecary follows him off)

Argan. Merciful heaven! I'm done for! That's the end—I'm dying.
Béralde. Brother, don't be a fool.
Argan. All those Pepsias—they're coming on already. I feel terrible.
Béralde. Ridiculous! Now, listen: old Purgon's threats have as much chance of killing, as his medicines have of curing you.
Now's your chance to rid yourself of doctors—once and for all.
Argan. No, no, no. I must have a doctor to look after me.
Béralde. Don't be ridiculous! (Then suddenly, remembering) No.
What am I saying? I was forgetting . . .
Argan. Eh?
Béralde. Of course you must have a doctor.
Argan. Why? Am I looking ill?
Béralde. Terrible!
Argan. Aaah!
Béralde. You must have a new one—who must find some new, and drastic, remedies for you; and not waste a moment of time
Argan (hopelessly) Where can we find one? They stick together, like the leeches that they are. There's not a doctor dare offend old Purgon. No. I'm finished.

(Toinette enters l)

Toinette. There's a doctor, Monsieur Argan, below, who's called to see you.
Argan (too bemused to take in what she has said) What was that?
Toinette (repeating) A doctor come to see you.
Argan. Who?
Toinette. I haven't an idea.
Argan. What's his name?
Toinette. He wouldn't tell me.
Argan. What's he want?
Toinette. He wouldn't say that either. But he was very urgent.
Argan. Urgent?
Toinette. That he must see you. He's come to Paris, from abroad, only to visit you.
Argan. Very strange.
Toinette. It's stranger than that.
Argan. Stranger than what?
Toinette. You won't believe it, Monsieur Argan—nor you, Monsieur Béralde.
BÉRALDÉ. I'm sure I shan't.
TOINETTE. I opened the door to him; and there he stood. If
I didn't know my mother didn't have two of us at once, I could
have sworn he was my twin.
BÉRALDÉ. Your twin!
TOINETTE. About my age; the same height; and—as I stand
here—the spitten image of me.
ARGAN. How did you know he was a doctor?
TOINETTE. He told me so.
ARGAN. Maybe of Philosophy. Or Music—I've had enough of
them.
TOINETTE. Oh, no—of Medicine. He wore his doctor's things.
Hat and cloak, and has a little beard, but, even so, I do assure
you, the likeness is almost unbelievable.
BÉRALDÉ (to Argan) Well, as he's a doctor, he seems an answer
to your prayer. You'd better see him.
ARGAN (To Toinet) Ask him to come up.

(Toinet exits L)

(To Bérald) What do you make of it?
BÉRALDÉ. Very mysterious.
ARGAN. Well, we shall see.
BÉRALDÉ. We shall. But what?

(They wait.
TOINETTE comes sweeping into the room, in all the rig-out of a
doctor; which we have already seen on Dr Diaforus and his son, and
Dr Purgon, the tall hat and gown. She has, too, a small beard. And it
is essential that the beard should look as real as possible, and can be
removed and replaced quickly. Now, she is putting on the act of her life.
She stops, and regards the two men who are staring at her)

TOINETTE (as the doctor) And which of you two gentlemen, if I
may make so bold to ask, is the great and famous Monsieur
Argan?
ARGAN. Me! But I'm not famous.
TOINETTE (as the doctor) You belittle yourself. Whenever and
wherever doctors are gathered together to discuss their Art, your
case is spoken of.
ARGAN. You don't say so?
TOINETTE. So many ailments, so much disease in one frail
body. You are, good monsieur, medically speaking, the Wonder
of the Age.
ARGAN. Good gracious me!
TOINETTE. Only the other day, lecturing to my students in
Milan, I spent three hours on you. I know you inside-out. From
head to foot.
ARGAN. This is very surprising. May I ask your name?
TOINETTE. That, I am afraid, I cannot tell you. I, too, am not unknown. My fame, like yours, is international. I have indeed cured every known disease—as well as several others. If it were known that I was here in Paris, I should be besieged by every doctor seeking my advice. And I'm only here for a few hours, quite incognito, especially to visit you.

ARGAN. I'm sure I'm very honoured. (Then, suddenly, he seems to see Toinette in her make-up. He remains for a long moment, dead still, staring at her. To himself) Extraordinary! Most extraordinary!

TOINETTE. May I ask what is extraordinary?

ARGAN. Your likeness to my maid.

TOINETTE. Indeed! You don't say so. She herself said something about it to me when she let me in.

ARGAN. It's more than extraordinary. It's staggering! Brother, what do you say?

BÉRALDE (pretending to hesitate) Um—yes—I can see what you mean. Yes. There is some slight resemblance.

ARGAN. Slight? It's unbelievable!

BÉRALDE (moving between Argan and Toinette) My dear fellow, you're making yourself ridiculous. We all have two eyes; a nose; a mouth. And if the eyes are something of the same colour, the nose something of the same shape, the mouth something of the same size—and in the same face, all these features have something of similarity—why then the "likeness" can be—to say the least—at first sight, surprising.

ARGAN. I don't know what you're talking about. This isn't a "likeness"—it's the same face. (He pushes Béralde aside) Out of the way. I want to have another look. (He stares at Toinette) Young doctor—if that's what you really are—will you do me a favour?

TOINETTE. I'm at your service, Monsieur Argan.

ARGAN. Come nearer.

TOINETTE. I can see you quite well from here.

ARGAN. But I can't see you. And I want a closer look. Much closer.

TOINETTE. If you'll excuse me, as it seems I may be here some little while, I must speak to my coachman—he can feed the horses.

(Toinette disappears out of the door L, but in the few moments that it takes her to slip off the hat, cloak and beard, she puts her head in again through the door, as herself)

Did you call?

ARGAN. Not me.

TOINETTE (coming into the room) Nor you, Monsieur Béralde?

BÉRALDE. No, no—I didn't.

TOINETTE. Funny thing! I could have sworn I heard you. Where's that doctor?

ARGAN. Gone to see his coachman.
TOINETTE. Is he coming back?
BÉRALDE. Of course. Why shouldn’t he?
TOINETTE. Well, in that case—and as you don’t want me . . .
(She starts off hurriedly towards the door)
ARGAN (shouting after her) Here! Hi! Come back. Stay here!
TOINETTE. What for?
ARGAN. I’m getting to the bottom of all this.
TOINETTE. Of all what?
ARGAN. This incredible likeness.
TOINETTE. But didn’t I tell you—I couldn’t believe my eyes.
ARGAN. And nor can I. So till he comes back, you stop where
you are.
TOINETTE. I’ve got my work to do.
ARGAN. Never mind your work.
TOINETTE. But I’m cooking your dinner.
ARGAN. That can wait.
TOINETTE. Can it? You won’t get any dinner—it’ll burn.
ARGAN. Eh? (He hesitates for a moment) Well—let it burn.

(TOINETTE makes a gesture of despair towards Béralde, unnoticed
by Argan, and they wait)

BÉRALDE. You know, I have an idea that while Toinette is
here, he won’t come back at all.
TOINETTE. Really, Monsieur Béralde. What makes you say
that?

(ARGAN gives a dry and enigmatical laugh, which turns into a
cough)

ARGAN. Get me a glass of water.
TOINETTE (making for the door, in a rush) Yes, I’ll get you one.
ARGAN (yelling after her) Where are you going? I said, a glass
of water—from my table.
TOINETTE. Oh! (She returns and pours him out a glass of water)
ARGAN (searching among his bottles) Now, where are my drops?
TOINETTE (off to the door again) I’ve got ’em in the kitchen.
ARGAN (yelling after her again) No—I’ve got ’em here.
TOINETTE. Oh! (So, again, foiled, she returns and pours out his drops)

(They wait)

BÉRALDE. He’s taking his time . . .
TOINETTE (interrupting) I know what’s happened.
ARGAN. Eh?
TOINETTE. He’s lost.
ARGAN. Lost?
TOINETTE. In this great rambling house, he’d never find your
room; he’s probably roaming about the passages. I’ll go and find
him. (She makes for the door)
ARGAN (again yelling after her) Here! Hi! Come back.
BERALDE. Really, brother, I think she may be right. And if you lose this doctor, your last chance has gone.

ARGAN. Oh! (To Toinette) Well, I'll not let you leave this room, unless you swear to me that if you find him, you'll come back with him.

TOINETTE. Oh, yes, I'll swear to that.

(Toinette disappears out of the door; and, at once, we hear her voice, speaking loudly as the doctor)

(Off) Oh, thank you. Thank you very much. I am relieved to see you. (Then, as herself) I came to find you, sir. I thought you might be lost. (As the doctor) Indeed I was. That's very kind of you. So many passages—I thought I should never be seen again. And so many mysterious doors. (As herself) This is Monsieur Argan's door. (As the doctor) I thought it must be, but I wasn't certain. (As herself) And you'll find him inside, waiting for you. I'm just going to the kitchen, to take his dinner out of the oven; but I'll be back in a moment.

(Toinette enters as the doctor)

What a charming maid you've got. So pretty, too. So kind of her to come and fetch me. You're very fortunate. (She advances into the room; and before Argan can say anything, she launches, as it were, a verbal offensive of her own) Now, Monsieur Argan. I have a question to put to you. You alluded to me, a few minutes ago, as a young doctor. How old do you think I am?

ARGAN. How old? Well—I should say—(then with an unusual edge of shrewdness) about the same age as that "charming"—and very cunning—maid of mine.

TOINETTE (laughing it off) Oh, but you're very wrong. I'm nearing eighty.

ARGAN (quite taken aback) Eighty!

TOINETTE. You see, I'm my own doctor. I treat myself. I take my own medicines. And I have discovered, among other things, the Secret of Eternal Youth.

ARGAN. Well, I must say, for eighty you're a very fine young—old—fellow! And now, my venerable young sir, I have a question to put to you. (He pauses for a moment)

TOINETTE. Yes.

ARGAN. Where's Toinette? Why hasn't she come back?

TOINETTE (suddenly shouting at him) Open your mouth.

ARGAN (again taken by surprise) Eh?

TOINETTE. I said—"Open your mouth".

(ARGAN opens his mouth)

Put out your tongue.

(ARGAN puts out his tongue)

Shut your mouth.
(Argan shuts his mouth, but opens it again to speak; but before he can get a word out, Toinette fires a question at him, which he cannot help answering)

Do you ever have headaches?
Argan. Very often.
Toinette. Palpitations?
Argan. Frequently.
Toinette. Occasional stomach pains?
Argan. Nearly all the time.
Toinette. Exactly as I foresaw.
Argan (suddenly bursting out) It's no good!
Béralde (butting in) Brother, what's no good?
Argan. I don't believe it.
Béralde. Don't believe what?
Argan. I'm being made a fool of!
Toinette (with an air of immense authority) Really, Monsieur Argan, enough of this ridiculous obsession. I shall begin to think your mind is going, and there's no hope for you. (But as she says this, she moves behind the screen, where Argan cannot see her; and takes off her little beard, hat and gown; continuing to speak as she does so) I'm mixing a medicine for you; one that I take myself—it will restore your youth. One dose every day for the next week, and every day you will lose five years.
Argan (unimpressed) That's as may be. But I want to see Toinette. (He leans as far as he can, out of his chair, towards his right, in a quite unsuccessful attempt to see behind the screen.

(Toinette, as herself, comes from behind the screen to his left, so that he is unaware that she is there. She leans across the chair to touch his arm)

Toinette (as herself) It's all right, Monsieur Argan; here I am. I've taken your dinner out of the oven—it wasn't burnt. And now I'll just run back and keep it hot for you; so that you can have it the moment he's gone. (She starts off towards the door L)
Béralde. Well, brother?

(Argan turns towards Béralde, which enables Toinette to dart back behind the screen. At once, she begins talking as the doctor)

Toinette (as the doctor; shouting) Hi, girl! Don't run away! Where are you off to? Here; come here. I want your help. I'm going to give your master his first dose now. I'll leave the other six doses here with you—but I want you to watch me mix it. So hold the glass for me—very steady—that's right. This needs careful measuring. One drop too little, or a drop too much—a matter of life and death.
Argan. Extraordinary! I never could have believed if I hadn't seen them together.
(Toinette appears from behind the screen as the doctor, carrying the dose of medicine)

TOINETTE (as the doctor; giving the medicine to Argan) Drink this. And I make only one stipulation. During this next week, you must rest. And rest **completely**. No outside activities or distractions of **any** sort. None for business or pleasure, social or family reasons. Not much to ask—and all-important. Monsieur Béralde, will you see to that?

BéRALDE. Indeed I will.

TOINETTE. Good.

ARGAN. Yes, but... 

TOINETTE (as the doctor) Drink!

(ARGAN drinks the medicine)

(As the doctor; taking the glass) Girl! Take this glass; wipe it up carefully; then you can go. (To Argan) It's possibly a little late to restore your youth; but follow my instructions, and I can promise you a vigorous middle-age! Good-bye. (She seizes his hand)

ARGAN (because of the suddenness and strength of the grip) Wow!

TOINETTE. Did that hurt?

ARGAN. Well—yes. It did—a bit.

TOINETTE. That arm's no use. I'd have it off.

ARGAN. Off?

TOINETTE. It's drawing the strength from all that side of your body. You'll do better without it.

ARGAN. Without it?

TOINETTE. Do your eyes ever water?

ARGAN. Considerably.

TOINETTE. I'd have one of them out. It doesn't matter which—you'll see better with the other.

ARGAN. Yes—but... 

TOINETTE. I'll send a surgeon to you. He can do both operations at once. (She strides to the door L where she turns) One more question—who's your doctor?

ARGAN. Dr Purgon.

TOINETTE. Purgon! What a **disaster**! The worst doctor in Paris—with two exceptions.

BéRALDE. And who are they?

TOINETTE. An old fellow called Diaforus, and his son. (To Argan) D'you know them?

ARGAN. Well, yes—I do.

TOINETTE. I'm sorry to hear it. Old Diaforus isn't a doctor—he's a murderer. And his son's a half-wit. My last word to you is a solemn warning. **Have nothing to do with them**! Either as doctors, or people. They'd be a menace to your health and happiness. Keep clear of them—and as you value your life, stop quiet, here, in your room.

(TOINETTE sweeps out of the door L)
BÉRALDE. There's a doctor for you!
ARGAN. You disapprove of doctors.
BÉRALDE. This one was different.

(TOINETTE enters as herself)

TOINETTE. Well! That doctor! How old did he say he was?
BÉRALDE. Eighty.
TOINETTE. He's been trying to feel my pulse.
ARGAN. What's wrong with that? It's what all doctors do.
TOINETTE. He has his own ideas as to where the pulses are.
BÉRALDE. At eighty! Brother, you should take heart. You remember what he promised you—a vigorous middle-age. There'll be no holding you.
ARGAN. A fat chance I should stand—with one arm and one eye!
BÉRALDE. Oh, don't worry about that. That's unimportant.
ARGAN. Unimportant!
BÉRALDE. When the surgeon comes, send him away.
ARGAN. Can I?
BÉRALDE. Of course you can. As long as you take his medicine and stop here in your room, absolutely quiet, for at least a week. I shall see to that.
ARGAN. But what about this marriage?
BÉRALDE. After what you heard about old Diaforus, and his half-wit son, I presume that's off.
ARGAN (doubtfully) Well—possibly! Purgon withdrawing his money, makes a big difference. (With decision) She'll have to be a nun.
BÉRALDE (this time completely taken by surprise) A what?
ARGAN. A nun.
BÉRALDE. A nun?
ARGAN. My wife has wished it. Now she shall have her way.
BÉRALDE (with growing, and quite real, indignation) Your wife has wished it. For God's sake, why?
ARGAN. That's no concern of yours. My wife has expressed a wish; and since my own plan has failed, that's good enough for me.
BÉRALDE (now really angry) Really, this is too much! I must speak my mind. If there's one thing that enrages me more than your infatuation for your doctors, it's your utter blindness about your wife.
ARGAN. What's that?
BÉRALDE (still white-hot) I've always meant to say it. Now it's been said. The way you fall headlong into any trap that woman sets for you.
TOINETTE (unexpectedly putting on another act) Oh, no, Monsieur Béralde. How can you say so? Madame would never set a trap for
him. She loves him. She adores him. If you could see them together—like two sweethearts.

ARGAN. Well said, Toinette. I didn’t expect it of you. You’re a good girl. Now, brother! If you won’t believe it from me, perhaps you will from her.

BÉRALDE. Indeed I’ll not. Neither from her, nor anyone.

TOINETTE. But, monsieur, I can prove it.

BÉRALDE. Prove it? How?

TOINETTE. Madame came home just a few minutes ago—she’s coming up here now. Monsieur Argan, lie right back in your chair; and pretend you’re dead. Then we shall all of us see how much she cares for you.

ARGAN. Pretend I’m dead? I don’t like the idea at all.

BÉRALDE. Ah! When it comes to the point of proof, you’re afraid to face it.

ARGAN. Indeed I’m not.

BÉRALDE. Then do as Toinette suggests.

TOINETTE. I hear her coming. Lie down, Monsieur Argan. (To Béralde) And you, hide yourself here.

(TOINETTE pushes Béralde behind the screen. They wait a few moments, then ARGAN sits up)

ARGAN. Only a few moments. We mustn’t keep her in suspense. The shock might kill her.

TOINETTE. Yes, yes, yes—only a few moments. But lie down, lie—she’s coming.

(Again they wait, and again Argan suddenly sits bolt upright)

ARGAN. There’s no danger in pretending to be dead?

TOINETTE (running at him) No. No. No. Lie down!

(TOINETTE gives Argan a great shove, which sends him back sprawling helpless in his chair.

BÉLINE enters l. TOINETTE sets up a great wailing)

BÉLINE (in the doorway) Toinette!

(TOINETTE wails louder)

TOINETTE

(TOINETTE makes it possible for Béline to be heard)

Whatever is it? Why this caterwauling?

TOINETTE. Oh, madame! A dreadful thing has happened.

BÉLINE. Dreadful? What?

TOINETTE. The master! Oh, the poor master!

BÉLINE. What about him?

TOINETTE. I can’t bear to tell you.

BÉLINE. Tell me.

TOINETTE. He’s dead!
BÉLINE. Dead? My husband dead?
TOINETTE. Oh, quite! Dead as a door-nail! I came in here just
now, and there he was; stretched out, just as you see him. Cold.
And stark. And lifeless. His poor heart stopped.

(For a long moment BÉLINE remains standing where she is in the
doorway, then comes slowly into the room, and sits on the chair l.c. She
seems dazed, as if she had not taken in what she had heard. TOINETTE
begins to wail again)

BÉLINE. Really, Toinette! I don’t know what you’ve got to make
such a fuss about.
TOINETTE. Madame, I can’t help crying.
BÉLINE. Oh, don’t be ridiculous! Now that the old fool can’t
hear us, at least we can be honest. It’s a good riddance! What
earthly use was he to anyone? His endless illnesses. The ceaseless
“treatments”. Revolting, most of them. There were times I didn’t
know how to bear it. Now it’s over. Well, thank heaven for that!

(Very suddenly, ARGAN sits bolt upright. BÉLINE screams. BÉRALDE
moves from behind the screen. After the scream, there is a moment’s utter
silence)

TOINETTE. Would you believe it—the deceased not dead.

(BÉLINE, with a great cry, rises and rushes out l. It is then ARGAN
who sets up a howling)

ARGAN. Oh, brother, brother, brother!

(BÉRALDE goes swiftly to Argan)

Now I really do wish that I were dead. The one person in the
world I was quite sure loved me. Did you hear?
BÉRALDE. Indeed, I did!
ARGAN. Now I’ve got nobody.
BÉRALDE. That’s absurd—you’ve got a brother.
ARGAN. And you hate me.
BÉRALDE. Indeed I don’t.
ARGAN. You think I’m an old fool.
BÉRALDE. That’s a very different thing.
ARGAN. But I don’t want to be thought a fool.
BÉRALDE. Then you shouldn’t behave like one. And you have
your daughters.
ARGAN. And they both hate me.
TOINETTE. Oh, no, dear Monsieur Argan—Louise is far too
young to know whether she loves or hates; and my dear Mistress
Angelica loves you with all her heart.
ARGAN. You’re only trying to comfort me.
TOINETTE (running towards the door l.) Quickly! Lie down again!
Angelica’s coming! You may hear something else that’ll surprise
you.
(Argan flops back again in his chair. Béralde hurries again behind the screen. Toinette sets up another bout of wailing.

Angelica appears in the doorway)

Angelica. Toinette! Whatever is it?
Toinette. Oh, my dear Mistress—such a disaster.
Angelica. Disaster?
Toinette. Oh, your poor father—your poor dear loving father.
Angelica. My what?
Toinette. Your poor dear loving father. That's what I said. And well you know it's true.
Angelica. Well—what's the matter with him?
Toinette. He's dead!
Angelica. Dead?
Toinette (repeating what she had said before) I came in here, just now, and there he was—stretched out—just as you see him now; cold and lifeless—his poor heart stopped. (But all the time, as she speaks, she is making the most violent signs to Angelica, shaking her head and pointing to Argan, to make Angelica understand it is not so)

(Angelica, after a few moments of bewilderment, "gets it")

Angelica (as if utterly heart-broken) My father dead! Oh, no. It's more than I can bear. (Through the open door, she beckons for someone to enter) And to think, Toinette, that he has gone from us, when he was angry with me.

(Cléante appears in the doorway)

Toinette (loudly; for Argan's benefit) Why, here's Monsieur Cléante.
Cléante. Angelica!
Angelica. Don't speak to me!
Cléante. But, my beloved...
Angelica. I'm not your beloved. Nor can I ever be.
Cléante. For heaven's sake—what's happened?
Angelica. My father...
Cléante. I've come to see him.
Angelica. Well—there he is. Look at him! Look! He's dead.
Cléante. Dead?
Toinette. Dead as mutton.

(During this, signs have passed between them, to show that Cléante realizes the situation)

Cléante (now starting on his "act") What catastrophe! What utter catastrophe! Just when—on your wise uncle's advice—I'd come to ask him for your hand in marriage.
Angelica. No! I could never marry without my father's consent. And that he can never give. But he would have done. He could be strict, but he was just; and human; and so kind. Oh, my
beloved Father, if I could only bring you back to life, what happiness for all of us.

(Upon which, Argan suddenly sits bolt upright, and both Angelica and Cléante make the same appropriate reactions)

Toinette. Oh, Mistress Angelica! You must be some kind of Saint—you've worked a Miracle.

Argan. Don't talk such drivel. You know as well as I do, it was a trick.

Angelica. A trick! Oh, Father, how could you? What have I said? What have you heard me say?

Argan. Well, it was a surprise, I don't mind telling you.

Béralde. But after hearing your wife, you'll hardly wish to follow her instructions; and after hearing your daughter, I can't believe you'll deny her anything.

Cléante. Monsieur Argan, I ask your daughter's hand.

Toinette. Oh, dear Monsieur Argan, you can't say "No".

Argan. Can't I? You don't know what I can say. Dammit, I've been dead twice within the last few minutes; and had the two biggest shocks of all my life. I hardly know what I'm saying myself. (To Cléante) So you want to marry my daughter.

Cléante. Yes, yes I do.

Argan. But she can't marry a music master.

Cléante. I'm not a music master.

Argan. But you said you were.

Cléante. Oh—yes—so I did.

Argan. But why?

Cléante. It was a trick.

Argan. Outrageous! If there's anything I disapprove of—it's a trick.

Béralde \[(together; in loud protest)\] \{Really, brother!\}

Toinette \[\] \{(Oh, Monsieur Argan!\}

Argan (cutting them short) All right, all right—enough of that!

(Turning to Cléante) You're not a doctor by any chance?

Cléante. No.

Argan. Pity. If you'd been a doctor, you could have had her.

Cléante. Then I'll become one.

Béralde. I have a better idea.

Argan. You and your ideas!

Béralde. Become a doctor yourself.

Argan. Me?

Béralde. Why not?

Argan. And what do I know of illness and disease?

Béralde. What do you need to know? Except about your own? And about those, you know more than any man in Paris—a doctor or layman.

Argan. That's true enough.
BÉRALDE. And only this afternoon you had an example—that vigorous young doctor of eighty, who treated himself.
ARGAN. But I know no Latin.
BÉRALDE. You’ll pick it up in no time. And, with a smattering of it, everything you say will sound a pearl of wisdom.
ARGAN. But how do I become a doctor?
BÉRALDE. Easily! A simple ceremony that can be performed here and now.
ARGAN. Here and now?
BÉRALDE. I happen to know that in the house next door, there is a meeting of the Faculty! Toinette, away with you, and invite them here at once.

(TOINETTE, bewildered as to what he means, stands hesitating)
And you, Angelica, and you, Cléante—both of you (hesitate, wondering where they are to —)

a moment, to explain.

(TOINETTE, ANGELICA and CLÉANTE exit L)

(He moves to Argan) Now, brother, this is the greatest moment of your life. In a few minutes you will be Dr Argan. I must go and summon the Faculty and you must be alone for a few moments, to prepare yourself for the Ordeal.
ARGAN. Ordeal?
BÉRALDE. My dear fellow, there can be no sort of Achievement, without some kind of Ordeal. (He hurries to the door, where he turns) The ceremony, of course, will be in Latin.
ARGAN. Latin!
BÉRALDE. You must do your best.

(BÉRALDE exits L.)
ARGAN is alone, apprehensive. He rises and moves about the room and ends up before his long row of medicine bottles. He consults them)

ARGAN. No; I’ll have to wait till I’m a doctor—I don’t know which to take.

(Suddenly, the door L bursts open and ELEVEN PEOPLE, in fact, the rest of the cast, come into the room. They are all disguised in the tall hats and flowing gowns of the Medical Faculty, and each carries an outsized instrument connected with the profession. They form a ring round Argan, and circle round him chanting and singing. The tune should be a simple one, gay and exciting, with a phrase capable of repetition at an ever-increasing crescendo)

THE ELEVEN (circling and chanting)
Here we are—Hic nos sumus
Omnès Learnéd Doctori,
Eminent Professiorès,
Clever, skilful Surgeoní,
Venerable Physicianès,
Every kind of Medici.

(One of the figures, in fact, Béralde, breaks from the circle to confront Argan)

1st Figure.
Invalid Imaginarius
You must answer questions various.

(He rejoins the ring, and again they circle and chant)

The Eleven.
Omnès Learnéd Doctori,
Eminent Professiorès,
Venerable Physicianès,
Every kind of Medici.

(Another figure, Toinette, breaks from the circle, to stand in front of Argan)

2nd Figure.
Answer why the drug called Opium
Doctors all prescribe as Dope-i-um.

Argan.
Why? Because, non disputandum.

(The circle raises a cheer at his Latin. Thus encouraged, Argan continues)

Et, quod erat demonstrandum

(Another cheer. More encouraged, Argan goes on)

Opium is well known to Omnibus
As the remedy for Insomnibus.

(The circle dances more excitedly round him, perhaps joining hands or arms, and the tune increasing in volume and pace)

The Eleven.
Excellente! Excellentê!!
Argan is Intelligentê!
Vivat, vivat, vivat Argan.
He knows all the doctor’s Jargon.

(Another figure, Béline, breaks from the circle)

3rd Figure.
Answer, why for Gripes and Fever
Doctors order Laxitiva.

Argan.
Why, because non disputandum
Et, quod erat demonstrandum—
Enema administrare
Et Emitica donare
Purgitiva praescibère
Ergo Purgo!

**The Eleven (dancing round more and more wildly)**
Jubilate! Jubilate!
Vivat, vivat, vivat, Argan.

*(Another figure, Bonnefoy, disengages from the circle)*

**4th Figure.**
What for Bile and Bad Òdorum
Boils of every Categorum?

**Argan.**
Ergo Purgo.

*(Again the circle swirls)*

**The Eleven.**
Jubilate! Jubilate!
Vivat, vivat, vivat, Argan!

**4th Figure.**
Answer now without Erratum
What the Learned Facultatum
Recommends for Diabolicus,
Collywobbles, and the Colicus?

**Argan.**
Ergo Purgo.

*(Another circle of ever-increasing ecstasy)*

**The Eleven.**
Jubilate! Jubilate!
Vivat, vivat, vivat, Argan!

*(Two more figures disengage, hand in hand. They are Angelica and Cléante)*

**5th Figure.**
What for Bunions, Corns and Callouses,
Dandruff, Doldrums and Paralysis?

**6th Figure.**
Measles, Mumps and Laryngitis,
Rigor Mortis and St Vitus?

**Argan.**
Ergo Purgo.

**The Eleven (in a final frenzy)**
Jubilate! Jubilate!
Vivat, vivat, vivat, Argan!

*(Another figure, Diaforus, steps out of the circle)*
7th Figure (holding high both his arms)
  Nunc Silentium!

  (An exaggerated silence and expectancy falls. Diaforus makes the
  most of it)

  You have made correct responses
  Honi soit qui mal y penses
  Now before this High Assemblibus
  —One of you; and all of us—
  To uphold our Facultatē
  Steadfastly with Dignitā—
  Swear!

The Eleven.
  Swear, swear.

Argan.
  I swear.

  (Another figure, Thomas, steps forward)

8th Figure.
  Down in the sink with all Remedia
  Not in our Encyclopaedia.

  (Another figure, Louise, steps forward)

9th Figure.
  You may cure, or you may bury 'em,
  But you get your Honorarium.

  (Another figure, the Apothecary, steps forward)

10th Figure.
  Be known as General Practicionarius
  On the Medical Registrarius.

  (Another figure, Dr Purgon, steps forward)

11th Figure.
  Give him his Hat of Learning
  And his Scholar's Robe.

  (Argan is robed and hatted and the others pay homage)

1st Figure.
  Mumbo!

2nd Figure.
  Jumbo!

3rd Figure.
  Hic!

4th Figure.
  Haec!

5th Figure.
  Hocum!
6TH FIGURE.
    Purge 'em!

7TH FIGURE
    Bleed 'em!

8TH FIGURE.
    Choke 'em!

9TH FIGURE.
    Soak 'em!

10TH FIGURE.
    Novus Doctor!

11TH FIGURE.
    Quack. Quack. Quack!

THE ELEVEN.
    Quack. Quack!

1ST FIGURE.
    The Ceremony is over!
    And your state is changed.
    No longer an Imaginary Invalid—
    But, in your own right, "Doctor Imaginaire".

(BÉRALDE removes his hat and gown)

ARGAN (gazing in amazed astonishment at Béralde) Brother!

(TOINETTE, ANGELICA and ClÉANTE remove their hats and gowns)

Toinette!

(Angelica and ClÉANTE embrace)

(He looks around, sees Angelica and ClÉANTE and shouts at them) Here! Hey! What's this?

(Angelica and ClÉANTE rush to Argan, Angelica to R of him, and ClÉANTE to L of him)

ClÉANTE (shaking Argan's hand) A great scholar! I congratulate you.

Angelica (kissing Argan) A doctor for a father—I'm so proud of you.

Argan. Quickly—pen and paper. Bring me pen and paper. Pen and paper.

(Angelica fetches pen and paper from the table R and gives them to Argan)

I don't feel at all well—I must write myself out a prescription.

Argan writes as—

the Curtain falls
FURNITURE AND PROPERTY LIST

ACT I

On stage—Large armchair. On it: pillows, cushions, rugs
Table (c). On it: sheaf of papers, quill pen, inkwell, counters, abacus, handbell, carafe of water, tumbler
Upright chair (tc)
Small table. On it: bottles of medicine, boxes of pills, 2 medicine glasses
Upright chair (rc)
Cupboard (up r). In it: birch rod
Screen (up c). Behind it: glass of medicine
Spinet
Duet stool

Off stage—Tray (TINETTE)
Documents (BONNEFOY)
Duster (TINETTE)

Personal—ARGAN: stick

ACT II

Personal—THOMAS: spectacles, handkerchief
CLÉANTE: manuscript music

ACT III

Set—On table r: quill pen, inkwell

Off stage—Outsize syringe (APOTHECARY)
Hat, gown and beard (TINETTE)
7 hats and gowns (COMPANY)
11 outsize medical instruments (COMPANY)

Personal—DR. PURDON: document
ARGAN: outsize thermometer
EFFECTS PLOT

ACT I

Cue 1  ARGAN: "...and come here."
       Crash of breaking crockery

ACT II

Cue 2  CLÉANTE: "...in her dream."
       Sound of door bell

ACT III

No cues