Molière's Tartuffe

Translated by
Christopher Hampton

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
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ISBN 978-0-573-61746-1 Printed in U.S.A. #22024

A Note on the Text

The text published here is a translation of the complete Molière play. For various reasons, it differs in minor ways from the text played by the Royal Shakespeare Company. First, some small cuts were made in our production, which sometimes necessitated alterations in order to preserve the metre; secondly, Bill Alexander's decision to set the play in a dining-room, rather than in the anonymous *salle basse* referred to in Act Three, required some occasional adjustments, not preserved here; and, finally, I have incorporated some second thoughts of my own, arrived at since the production opened.

A word about Tartuffe's servant, the mysterious Laurent. This character is not included in Molière's *dramatis personae*: but the layout of French classical plays calls for a new scene at the appearance of each new character and lists the characters at the head of each scene—and at the head of Act Three, Scene 2, is found the name of Laurent. Acting on this hint, and on Orgon's description of him as Tartuffe's 'mirror-image', we introduced Laurent in a number of other scenes in the play; and indeed in the final scene, without changing the text, the Officer managed to indicate, by a resourceful use of the personal pronoun, that it was Laurent who had betrayed Tartuffe to the King. That Tartuffe's pupil has learnt from him the rewards of judicious treachery is perhaps more likely than that the King, in addition to all his other virtues, is a master detective. In any event, I pass it on as what seems to me one of the production's happiest inventions.

C.H.

A Note on the Translation

The verse plays of Molière are traditionally translated either into prose or into rhymed iambic pentameter (and never, as far as I know, into their own metre, the dodecasyllabic Alexandrine of the French classical theatre, so memorably disposed of by Pope in his description of the 'needless Alexandrine', 'that like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along'). Since Molière also wrote prose plays, in which the tone was less formal, the language racier and the adjectives fewer, translation into prose, whatever its advantages in conveying Molière's invariable lucidity, would seem to be something of an evasion. With translations into rhyming verse, the difficulties lie elsewhere. The French language has a much more rigid and defined phonetic structure than English; and when one takes into account, additionally, the inflected endings, the regular participial formations, the silent plurals and the verb forms, whether infinitive or conjugated, it will be clear that the business of finding a rhyme is infinitely simpler and more natural in French than it can ever be in English. There have been a number of admirable rhyming translations of Molière: but the ingenuity they demand cannot avoid drawing attention to itself, somewhat at the expense of the line of the play as a whole. It's impossible to imagine, for example, a rhyme in a Molière play causing laughter *in itself*, a common effect in good English rhymed translations.

For these and other reasons, it seemed to me logical to translate a play written in Alexandrines, the form naturally adopted by dramatists in the golden age of French theatre, into the form adopted equally naturally by English dramatists in their golden age: namely blank verse. My iambics are rougher and less regular than Molière's Alexandrines; but a certain insouciance he has with syllable counts shows him to be not entirely comfortable within the confines of the form. In any event, it's a long time since I first expressed this theory of how Molière's verse plays might be translated: and I'm grateful to the Royal Shakespeare Company for inviting me to put it into practice.

C.H.

A Note on the Play

The *Tartuffe* we know is the third distinct version of a play which had to wait five years before it was licensed for public performance by the King. To say that during that time it had become a *cause célèbre* would be something of an understatement: its underground reputation had spread so far afield that Queen Christina of Sweden had sent for a copy and applied (unsuccessfully) for permission to have it performed; while various respectable clerics, with or without benefit of having read the play, did not hesitate to demand that its author be burnt at the stake.

The two earlier versions of the play are unfortunately lost to us: all we do know for certain is that the first version, when it was privately performed for the King in 1664, was in three acts as opposed to five and was called *Tartuffe ou l'Hypocrite*. John Cairncross has painstakingly and convincingly deduced* that this first version consisted, by and large, of Acts One, Three and Four of the present text, ending perhaps (given Molière's classical taste for symmetry) with the Mme Pernelle scene from Act Five. Be that as it may, what is remarkable is that the finished *Tartuffe* seems so tightly constructed, showing none of the joins such a complicated process of reconstruction, expansion and compromise must have necessitated.

Small wonder that the play ends with the famous panegyric to Louis XIV for preserving not only Orgon and his family but the very existence of the play itself. And certainly when *Tartuffe* at last opened to the public on 5 February 1669 the vicissitudes of its composition in no way harmed its success: it played for an unprecedented twenty-eight consecutive performances and subsequently became (with around 3,000 performances at the Comédie-Française alone) the most frequently produced play in the French language.

C.H.

*John Cairncross, *New Light on Molière*, Droz/Minard, 1956.

Characters

MADAME PERNELLE, Orgon's mother
ORGON, Elmire's husband
ELMIRE, Orgon's wife
DAMIS, Orgon's son
MARIANE, Orgon's daughter, in love with Valère
VALÈRE, in love with Mariane
CLÉANTE, Orgon's brother-in-law
TARTUFFE, a hypocrite
DORINE, Mariane's maid
MONSIEUR LOYAL, a bailiff
AN OFFICER
FLIPOTE, Mme Pernelle's maidservant
LAURENT, Tartuffe's manservant

The play is set in Paris, in Orgon's house.

Tartuffe or The Impostor, translated by Christopher Hampton, was first performed at The Pit, London, on 20 July 1983. The cast was as follows:

MADAME PERNELLE	Sylvia Coleridge
ORGON	Nigel Hawthorne
ELMIRE	Alison Steadman
DAMIS	Mark Rylance
MARIANE	Katy Behean
VALÈRE	Ian Talbot
CLÉANTE	David Bradley
TARTUFFE	Antony Sher
DORINE	Stephanie Fayerman
MONSIEUR LOYAL	Robin Meredith
OFFICER	David Glover
FLIPOTE	Sara Mair-Thomas
LAURENT	John Tramper

Directed by Bill Alexander
Designed by Alison Chitty
Lighting by Leo Leibovici

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

MADAME PERNELLE, *her maidservant* FLIPOTE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, DORINE, DAMIS, CLÉANTE.

MME PERNELLE: Come on, Flipote, let's go, I can't stay here.
ELMIRE: Why are you in such a rush? We can't keep up.
MME PERNELLE: Then leave me, dear, don't take another step.
I'm sure I never asked for all this fuss.
ELMIRE: I think we know our duty and we'll do it.
But what is it that's made you run away?
MME PERNELLE: I can't bear all the turmoil in this house.
Nobody cares a button for my feelings.
It's been a most unedifying visit:
nobody listens to a word I say;
there's no respect, everyone shouts at once,
it's like some frightful Parliament of Apes.
DORINE: If . . .
MME PERNELLE: You, my girl, are nothing but a maid
with far too much to say and most of that
impertinent; we don't need your opinion.
DAMIS: But . . .
MME PERNELLE: There's a word for you, my boy:
buffoon.
Yes, I'm your grandmother and I should know.
And if I've told your father once, I've told him
a hundred times, I think you're a bad lot,
who'll never give him anything but heartache.
MARIANE: I think . . .
MME PERNELLE: Good Lord, the quiet one's found
her voice,
sweetness and light, the sister meek and mild;
but still waters run deep, they always say,
and deep down you're as bad as all the rest.

ELMIRE: But, mother . . .

MME PERNELLE: Now, dear, don't take this amiss,
but everything you do is simply wrong.
You ought to set these two a good example,
as their late mother never failed to do.
You spend too much, I must say it upsets me,
the way you go round dressed like a princess.
A woman who wants just to please her husband
has no business parading like a clothes-horse.

CLÉANTE: But, after all, Madame . . .

MME PERNELLE: And as for you,
it's not that I don't like you and respect you,
but if I were my son's wife, even if
you were my brother, you'd be barred the house:
spouting your endless theories about life,
which no one in their right mind would accept.
Perhaps I've been too frank; but I'm like that,
I never could conceal what's on my mind.

DAMIS: I'm sure your Monsieur Tartuffe would be pleased . . .

MME PERNELLE: He's a good man, who must be listened to,
and if I have to hear a fool like you
attacking him, I may get very cross.

DAMIS: Some sanctimonious faker seizes power,
and I'm supposed to lie back and enjoy it,
and no one is allowed the simplest pleasure
without permission from this turkey-cock!

DORINE: If what he says is anything to go by,
you move and you commit a mortal sin:
his beady critic's eye is watching you.

MME PERNELLE: And everything he watches must be watched.
He's trying to lead you up the path to Heaven,
and my son ought to force you all to love him.

DAMIS: No, listen to me, grandmother, no father,
no anyone could make me wish him well.

If I said otherwise, I would be lying.
The way he carries on infuriates me.
There's only one way out of this, I tell you,
I and that peasant can't but come to blows.

DORINE: You can't deny it's scandalous to see
a stranger taking over here, a beggar
who, when he came, had nothing on his feet
and whose whole wardrobe wasn't worth a fiver,
going so far as to forget his place,
lording it over us and finding fault.

MME PERNELLE: Good gracious me, you'd all be better off,
if you submitted to his pious will!

DORINE: You have this fantasy that he's a saint,
when everything he does proves he's a fraud.

MME PERNELLE: Be quiet!

DORINE: I'd need a written guarantee,
before I'd trust him or his man Laurent.

MME PERNELLE: I can't vouch for his servant, but Tartuffe
—you have my guarantee he's a good man.
The only reason you object to him
is that his criticisms are all true.
What makes him angry is your sinfulness,
his sole criterion is what's good for Heaven.

DORINE: I know, but why, especially recently,
is he so very down on visitors?
He makes so much fuss, it gives you a headache.
What harm's a courtesy visit do to Heaven?
You want my explanation? Keep it quiet,
(*She turns to* ELMIRE.)
but I'm convinced he's jealous of your friends.

MME PERNELLE: You shut your mouth and think before you speak.
He's not the only one who disapproves:
it's all the fuss your visitors bring with them,
carriages always blocking up the gates,

vast quantities of footmen milling round,
making a noise and upsetting the neighbours.
I'm willing to believe nothing goes on;
but people talk, and that's to be avoided.

CLÉANTE: And how do you propose to stop them talking?
Life would be pretty miserable if,
for fear of what some imbecile might say,
you had to give up all your closest friends.
And even if you did decide to do that,
you think you'd put a stop to all the rumours?
There's no defence against malicious talk.
So let's pay no attention to it, please,
let's live as blamelessly as we can manage
and leave the gossips to say what they like.

DORINE: I know who runs us down behind our backs,
it's Daphné, next door, and the dwarf, her husband.
It's always the most ludicrously guilty,
who are the first in line accusing others.
They never miss an opportunity
to batten on the slightest hint of friendship,
twist it to suit their purposes and then
gleefully spread the news to everyone.
They think they justify their own misconduct
by painting others' deeds in lurid colours,
and hope, in vain, to whitewash their intrigues,
or to sidestep the general condemnation
which weighs them down and redistribute it.

MME PERNELLE: Your arguments are quite irrelevant.
Orante, who's well known for her model life
and pious dedication, says, I hear,
she strongly disapproves of your salon.

DORINE: Well, she's a fine example, I must say!
She may personify austerity,
but what inspires her zeal is called old age.
She's virtuous because she has no choice.
As long as she was still at all attractive,

she made the most of everything she had;
but now the sparkle in her eye has dimmed,
she's registering withdrawal from the world
before it casts her off, and trying to hide
the sorry remnants of her faded beauty
behind an ornate veil of good behaviour.
These are the standard wiles of ageing flirts.
It's hard for them to watch their beaux
disperse.
And so the only outlet for their suffering
is to take virtue up professionally;
and the puritan code of these good ladies
implacably finds fault with everything.
They disapprove of everybody's life,
not from benevolence but spurred by envy:
they just can't tolerate the thought of pleasures,
which the onset of age denies to them.

MME PERNELLE: (*To* ELMIRE)
You all enjoy these fairytales, I see.
In your house no one gets a word in edgeways,
because of madam holding forth all day;
well, now I've got a chance to speak at last,
I'm telling you, the wisest thing my son
has ever done is to install Tartuffe,
whom God has sent here, just when he was
needed,
to save your souls, when you had gone astray;
listen to what he says, it's for your good,
everything he condemns deserves condemning.
These visitors, these dances, these discussions
—all of them are inventions of the devil;
you never hear a word about religion,
just idle chatter, songs, that sort of nonsense,
often as not demolishing your neighbours
and spreading slanders left and right, until
sensible people's heads are spinning with it,
dozens of rumours whipped up out of nothing,

and as a friend of mine, theologist,
put it so pithily the other day:
in the Tower of Babel, babble's what you get,
and he went on to illustrate his point . . .
(*She indicates* CLÉANTE.)
I don't know what he's sniggering about.
Go to an asylum if you want to laugh
and don't . . .
(*To* ELMIRE)
I'll say no more. Goodbye, my dear,
I take a very poor view of all this.
You won't be seeing me for quite some time.
(*She slaps* FLIPOTE.)
Well, come along, wake up, don't gawk at me!
My goodness me, I'll box your ears for you.
Get on with you, you slut!

SCENE TWO

CLÉANTE, DORINE.

CLÉANTE: I'm staying put,
I don't want her to start on me again.
Silly old . . .

DORINE: What a shame she isn't here
to comment on your turn of phrase: I know
she'd tell you you're the one who's being silly
and that no one could ever call her old.

CLÉANTE: She got annoyed with us for no good reason,
and she seems quite besotted with Tartuffe!

DORINE: I promise you her son is even worse
and if you saw him you would be appalled.
During the troubles he was very brave,
enhanced his reputation with the King,

but ever since he's fallen for Tartuffe,
he's gone around like someone in a daze.
He loves the man: a hundred times as much as
his wife, his son, his daughter or his mother;
he calls him brother, whispers all his secrets
to him alone and has appointed him
the watchful overseer of his conduct.
He pampers him, caresses him: I'd say
you couldn't be more loving to a mistress.
He sits him at the top end of the table,
enjoys watching him eat enough for six;
you have to serve him all the tastiest bits,
and even when he burps, he says: 'God bless
you!'
In short, he's mad about him; he's his hero,
his everything, admired in every way
and quoted on all possible occasions,
his slightest action is miraculous
and every word he says is like an oracle.
The fact is, he's a man can spot a victim
and knows how to exploit and dazzle him
with every bogus swindle in the book.
He wheedles money when he feels like it,
by turning on his sanctimonious cant
and doesn't hesitate to pick on us.
Even his servant orders us about,
gives himself airs and preaches wild-eyed sermons
and throws away our rouge and beauty spots.
The other day the brute found my lace bib
between two pages of *The Lives of the Saints*
and ripped it up, saying it was a crime
to stain what's holy with the devil's frills.

SCENE THREE

ELMIRE, MARIANE, DAMIS, CLÉANTE, DORINE.

ELMIRE: (*To* CLÉANTE)
You're very wise to have stayed here, you missed
her lecture at the gate. My husband's here:
he hasn't seen me and I'd rather wait
for him upstairs.

CLÉANTE: I'll wait and catch him here,
I've really only time to say hello.

DAMIS: Ask him about my sister's wedding, will you?
I have a feeling Tartuffe is against it
and forcing him to make these long delays.
It's important to me as well, you know.
My sister loves Valère and he loves her:
but, as you know, I'm in love with his sister,
and if . . .

DORINE: He's coming.

SCENE FOUR

ORGON, CLÉANTE, DORINE.

ORGON: Ah, Cléante, hello!

CLÉANTE: I was just on my way, I'm glad I caught you.
Nothing much out yet, is there, in the country?

ORGON: Dorine . . .
(*To* CLÉANTE)

You must excuse me, just a minute,
you don't mind if I find out what's been
happening
and put my mind at rest?
(*To* DORINE)
Everything fine?
What's everybody up to? Are they well?

DORINE: Two days ago the mistress had a fever
and a strange nagging headache all day long.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: Tartuffe's in the best of health,
big, fat and blooming, with his nice red mouth.

ORGON: Poor boy!

DORINE: She felt quite nauseous all evening
and couldn't touch a mouthful of her dinner,
her headache was so painful.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: He sat in front of her and ate alone,
swallowing, most religiously, a brace
of partridge, followed by a leg of mutton.

ORGON: Poor boy!

DORINE: She never closed her eyes all night,
she had hot flushes, which kept her awake,
we had to sit up with her till the dawn.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: He was struck down by a kind
of
pleasantly weary feeling and repaired
directly from the table to his room,
where he collapsed into his nice warm bed
and slumbered dreamlessly until the morning.

ORGON: Poor boy!

DORINE: We finally persuaded her
to be bled, and she felt better at once.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: Put his bravest face on it,
and, bracing himself against the blows of fate,

to make up for the blood the mistress lost,
drank four large tumblersful of wine for
breakfast.

ORGON: Poor boy!

DORINE: At any rate they're now quite well,
and I must go upstairs and tell the mistress
how interested you've been in her recovery.

SCENE FIVE

ORGON, CLÉANTE.

CLÉANTE: She's making fun of you, you must have
noticed;
and I don't want to make you angry, but,
quite frankly, it's no more than you deserve.
I've never heard of such grotesque behaviour:
how can this man have cast a spell and made
you
oblivious to everybody else?
So that as well as saving him from poverty,
you've gone as far as to . . .

ORGON: That's quite
enough!
How can you talk about him, you don't know
him.

CLÉANTE: Certainly I don't know him, but to guess
the kind of man he is, you only need to . . .

ORGON: No, you'd be captivated by him, and
your ecstasy would know no bounds. You see,
this is a man, who . . . well . . . a man in
fact . . .
er, to sum up, a man. You listen to him
and you enjoy the deepest peace of mind
and see the world for what it is: a dunghill.

Oh, yes, I've quite changed under his
instruction:
he teaches me to cast aside affection
and clear my mind of any trace of love;
now I could watch my mother or my brother,
my wife and children die, and not give that.

CLÉANTE: I see, he's a humanitarian.

ORGON: Ah, if you'd only been there when we met,
you'd feel as warm towards him as I do.
He'd arrive every day in church and kneel,
meekly, right next to me and never fail
to capture the whole congregation's notice
with the enthusiasm of his praying;
he'd groan and sigh and throw himself around
and humbly kiss the ground, time and again,
and when I left, he'd hurry on ahead
to hand me the holy water at the door.
His servant, who was like his mirror image,
told me about him, who he was, his poverty:
I gave him money; but, restrained as ever,
he always tried to give some back to me.
'Too much,' he'd say, 'I don't need half this
much,
What makes you think I should deserve your
pity?'
When I'd refuse to take it back, he'd go
and share it with the poor, in front of me.
Finally I was inspired to bring him here,
since when it seems that all of us have
flourished.
He disapproves of everything, of course,
and keeps a very close watch on my wife,
just to protect my honour; gives me names
of all the people who make eyes at her;
he's far more jealous than I've ever been.
You've no idea, the fervour of the man:
he sees the slightest failing as a sin,

he's scandalized by what we'd hardly notice;
recently he was full of self-reproach
for having caught a flea while he was praying
and killed it with excessive savagery.

CLÉANTE: What is this, are you making fun of me?
You must be mad, you think this
pantomime . . .

ORGON: Now, what you're saying smacks of atheism.
You're tainted with it, and if I've told you
once,
I've told you fifty times, that's the best way
to get yourself into quite serious trouble.

CLÉANTE: I know, that's what you people always say.
You want us all to be as blind as you are.
Good eyesight is a sign of atheism,
and anyone who doesn't worship idols
has no respect and no religious faith.
Nothing you say can frighten me: God sees
into my heart and I know what I mean.
You can't make me a slave of affectation:
false piety's as common as false courage,
and just as on the battlefield you find
that those who make the loudest noise are not
the truly brave, the truly pious, whose
example we should follow, equally,
are not the ones who pull the holiest faces.
Can it be true you don't make a distinction
between hypocrisy and piety?
And do you really class them both together,
respect the mask as highly as the face,
consider sham the equal of sincerity,
confuse appearance and reality,
value a ghost as much as someone living
and forgeries no less than genuine coin?
Men are peculiar creatures, most of them!
They never seem to hit the happy medium.
Reason's too limited, they burst its bounds,

and often what's most admirable's ruined
through sheer exaggeration and excess.
I only thought I'd mention this in passing.

ORGON: Yes, I see, you're a most distinguished genius,
repository of universal knowledge,
uniquely brilliant and uniquely wise,
an oracle, a Cato of our time,
compared to whom the rest of us are fools.

CLÉANTE: No, I am not a most distinguished genius,
repository of universal knowledge:
but there's one thing I do know how to do,
that's tell the difference between true and false.
And while there's no one I approve of more
than genuinely religious men, and nothing
nobler or more uplifting in the world
than the enthusiasm of true belief,
equally, there is nothing more disgraceful
than specious fervour laid on with a trowel,
and no one worse than those downright
impostors,
those worshippers in public, whose deceit
and sacreligious antics go unpunished,
while they pervert and make a mockery of
everything human beings hold most sacred;
those career mystics, businessmen on their
knees,
trying to notch up credit and prestige,
by screwing up their eyes and throwing fits;
those abnormally zealous ones, I mean,
chasing their fortunes via the road to Heaven,
who make demands between each ardent
prayer,
and make sure they are well installed at Court
before they preach withdrawal from the world,
whose faith's adjustable to fit their vices,
who are disloyal, fleet, vindictive, cunning,
and, when the time comes to destroy an enemy,

can brazenly disguise their fierce resentments
behind a cover of what's good for Heaven;
doubly dangerous because the weapons
they turn against us in their bitterness
are so respected, and because the passion,
for which they are so genuinely admired,
aims at our hearts a consecrated sword.
This faking is becoming far too common;
meanwhile our age has shown us, very often,
glorious examples of true piety,
easily recognizable as such.
Look at Ariston, look at Périandre,
Oronte, Alcidamas, Polydore, Clitandre:
no one disputes their genuineness, and yet
none of them ever boasts about his virtue
or displays such intolerable pride,
their religion is flexible and humane.
They're not censorious, because that would
show
an arrogance they'd rather leave to others,
if they reproach us, then it's through their
actions.
They don't judge by appearances, instead
their inclination's to think well of others.
They don't form cliques, they don't approve of
plotting:
their only aim is to live righteously.
They have no animosity against sinners,
reserving all their hatred for the sin,
and no urge to pursue the Church's interests
more violently than it would itself.
They're the ones I approve of, that's the way,
that's the example one should set oneself.
Frankly, your man is quite another species;
I'm sure you sing his praises in good faith,
but I believe you're blinded by mere show.

ORGON: Is that all?

CLÉANTE: Yes.

ORGON: Then perhaps you would excuse me?

(*He makes to go.*)

CLÉANTE: Oh, just one minute, please: I'll change the subject.
You have promised Valère your daughter's hand?

ORGON: Yes.

CLÉANTE: And you'd even given them a date?

ORGON: That's right.

CLÉANTE: Then why have you postponed the wedding?

ORGON: I've no idea.

CLÉANTE: Have you perhaps changed your mind?

ORGON: Possibly.

CLÉANTE: Are you going to break your word?

ORGON: I didn't say that.

CLÉANTE: I just can't imagine
what could prevent you honouring your promise.

ORGON: Depends.

CLÉANTE: What is all this evasiveness?
Valère has asked me to see you about it.

ORGON: Well, that is nice.

CLÉANTE: But what am I to tell him?

ORGON: You tell him what you like.

CLÉANTE: But then I have to know what you have in mind: what are your plans?

ORGON: To do God's will.

CLÉANTE: Be serious, will you? Look:
Valère has had your promise: will you keep it?

ORGON: Goodbye.

CLÉANTE: (*Alone*)
I fear the worst for his engagement.
I have to warn him of what's going on.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

ORGON, MARIANE.

ORGON: Mariane.
MARIANE: Yes, father.
ORGON: Come here, I'd like
a word with you in private.
MARIANE: What's in there?
(**ORGON** *is looking into a closet.*)
ORGON: Nothing, I'm only checking no one's there,
I wouldn't like us to be overheard.
No, that's all right. Well, Mariane, I've always
appreciated your obedience,
and you've always been very dear to me.
MARIANE: I'm very grateful, father, that you love me.
ORGON: Well said, my dear. And if I'm to continue,
your only worry need be to provide me
with what I want.
MARIANE: I take a pride in it.
ORGON: Good. What do you think of our guest,
Tartuffe?
MARIANE: Who, me?
ORGON: You. Now, be careful what you say.
MARIANE: Oh, dear. Well, I'll say anything you like.
ORGON: How very sensible. Well, then, my dear,
why don't you say he's wholly excellent,
he's reached your heart and it would make you
happy
if I agreed to let him marry you?
Mm?
(**MARIANE** *steps back, surprised.*)
MARIANE: Mm?
ORGON: What is it?

MARIANE: Sorry?

ORGON: What?

MARIANE: I don't think I caught what you said.

ORGON: What do you mean?

MARIANE: Who is it that you wanted me to say had reached my heart? And it would make me happy if you agreed to let me marry whom?

ORGON: Tartuffe.

MARIANE: But, look, it wouldn't, not at all. Why should you want to make me tell a lie?

ORGON: What I want is for it to be the truth; that's my decision, what more do you need?

MARIANE: You mean you want . . .

ORGON: Yes, my dear, I intend to make Tartuffe a member of the family. He's going to be your husband, it's all settled, and since I have the power to insist . . .

SCENE TWO

DORINE, ORGON, MARIANE.
ORGON *notices* DORINE.

ORGON: What are you doing? Eavesdropping again? Suffering from chronic curiosity?

DORINE: I heard somebody mentioning this marriage, and I couldn't decide if it was rumour, with some basis in fact, or pure invention: the one obvious thing was it was nonsense.

ORGON: You find it unbelievable?

DORINE: So much so,
I wouldn't believe it, even if you told me.
ORGON: I think I know a way to make you, though.
DORINE: I know, you're telling us a fairy story.
ORGON: I'm telling you exactly what will happen.
DORINE: Rubbish!
ORGON: Now, this is serious, Mariane.
DORINE: Get on with you, your father doesn't mean it,
he's joking.
ORGON: Will you listen . . . ?
DORINE: No, no good,
we don't believe you.
ORGON: I'm starting to get
annoyed.
DORINE: All right, we do believe you, then.
In which case, shame on you. You look quite
normal,
that big beard in the middle of your face,
and yet you mean you're mad enough to . . .
ORGON: Listen:
you've taken certain liberties today
which I don't like one little bit: I warn you . . .
DORINE: Let's try and keep our temper, shall we, sir?
I still think this is some elaborate joke.
Your daughter isn't cut out for a bigot,
and he should have other things on his mind.
And anyway, what possible advantage
could such a marriage bring you? And why
choose
a beggar for a son-in-law with all
your money . . . ?
ORGON: That's enough. If he has
nothing,
all the more reason to admire him.
His poverty is honest poverty:
it lifts him higher than the great, he's poor
through voluntary renunciation and

his pure indifference to temporal things
and his commitment to eternity.
I intend to provide him with some means,
free him from want and re-acquire his lands,
properties highly thought of where he comes
from;
even as he stands, it's obvious he's a
gentleman.

DORINE: So he keeps saying, and that kind of pride
doesn't quite fit with his religiousness.
You wouldn't think a man who'd chosen
sainthood
would need to boast about his name and rank;
the self-effacing rules of piety
hardly accommodate rampant ambition.
What is the purpose of his vanity . . . ?
This is upsetting you: let's leave his
background
and talk about his personality.
Could you really, without the least remorse,
hand a girl like her to a man like him?
Can't you foresee how such a marriage would
turn out, have you no sense of decency?
If you force any girl to take a husband
against her will, you're gambling with her
virtue;
she may intend to lead a life of honour,
but that depends on who you've chosen for her,
and those whose wives are famously unfaithful
have often driven them to that condition.
And after all it's quite hard to be faithful
to certain husbands cast in a certain mould;
and anyone who gives a girl away
to a man she can't stand is answerable
before God for whatever she might do.
So think what danger your plan puts you in.

ORGON: Do I need her to teach me how to live?

DORINE: If you've got any sense, you'll listen to me.
ORGON: Let us not waste our time, dear, on this
nonsense:
I am your father and I know what's best.
It's true, I had promised you to Valère;
but he's been seen more than once playing
cards,
and I suspect he may be a freethinker;
I haven't seen a lot of him in church.
DORINE: Why should he go exactly when you do?
He's not, like others, just there to be seen.
ORGON: I don't need your opinion. I just know
Heaven smiles on Tartuffe and that's an asset
second to none. This marriage will fulfil
your wildest dreams, a series of sweet
pleasures.
You'll live together, faithfully in love,
like two true children, like two turtle-doves.
You'll never quarrel, and you'll find that you
can turn him into anything you please.
DORINE: A cuckold, for example, which is all
she'll want to turn him into.
ORGON: That's enough!
DORINE: It's written all over him, it's in his stars;
not all your daughter's virtue could resist it.
ORGON: Will you stop interrupting me? Shut up,
keep your nose out of other people's business.
DORINE: I'm only trying to help.
(*From now on, she interrupts him every time he turns away to speak to his daughter.*)
ORGON: Well, don't; be quiet.
DORINE: It's only because we love you . . .
ORGON: I don't want
to be loved.
DORINE: Even so, I want to love you.
ORGON: Ah!
DORINE: See, your reputation is important

to me, I hate to see you lay yourself
open to general ridicule.

ORGON: Shut up!

DORINE: How could I let you contract such a marriage,
in all conscience?

ORGON: Will you be quiet, snake,
before I . . .

DORINE: I thought you were supposed to be
religious.

ORGON: So I am, but all this jabber
is making my blood boil and I insist
you hold your tongue.

DORINE: Certainly. I won't say
another word. But you can't stop me thinking.

ORGON: Think all you like; just concentrate on not
speaking to me, or . . . Enough.
(*He turns to his daughter.*)
In my wisdom,
after mature consideration . . .

DORINE: (*Aside*)
It's
infuriating not to be allowed
to speak.
(*She stops talking, as soon as he turns to her.*)

ORGON: While not exactly very pretty,
Tartuffe is . . .

DORINE: (*Aside*)
Off the side of Notre Dame!

ORGON: Even if you could find no sympathy
for all his gifts . . .

DORINE: (*Aside*)
This *is* your lucky day!
(ORGON *turns to face* DORINE*; he watches her,
listening, with his arms folded.*)
If I was in her place, I'm telling you,
no man would marry me against my will;
or soon after the wedding he'd find out