

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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The Learned Ladies

by Molière

Translated and Adapted by
Freyda Thomas

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
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FOUNDED 1830

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CHARACTERS

BELISE – Sister to Chrysale & Arista

HENRIETTE – Younger daughter of Chrysale & Philamente

ARMANDE – Elder Daughter of Chrysale & Philamente

LYCANDRE – Henriette's suitor

ARISTA – Sister to Chrysale & Belise

MARTINE – the servant, young, sexy & buxom

CHRYSALE – Husband of Philamente

PHILAMENTE – Wife of Chrysale

TRISSOTIN – A house guest. A so-called poet

VADIUS – Friend of Trissotin

JUDGE – Played by Vadius

SERVANTS – Non-speaking roles, budget permitting (optional)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This new adaptation was written to be performed in a stylized 20th or 21st century setting. Just about any time period between 1910 and the present will work. The language, although in verse, is modern and needs a setting and style conducive to its tone. With a few minor changes in the text, the play can be performed as a pre-20th century piece as well.

The costumes are, of course, to be selected according to the period chosen. Each character can wear the same costume throughout the play. Belise may have attaching pieces (painter's smock, tutu, Buddhist robes, etc.), for her various "lessons." In a more modern setting Armande and Henriette might be in tennis outfits at the beginning, and change to dresses (or slacks) for Act I, Scene 3. In the early 1970s, a French touring company came through Philadelphia to perform the original play in French; Philamente sported a teased wig and stretch pants, Cleante arrived in a motorcycle jacket, and Belise wore feathered chiffon lounge pants with matching poncho. These are only suggestions, to illustrate that one can take great liberties with this adaptation.

A word about the set: because of the build-up to the seduction scene in Act II Scene 2, the furniture setup should lend itself to a cat-and-mouse chase between the character of Trissotin and his intended Henriette.

*For Jan, who gave me titles, endings and everything in between,
from the generosity of her heart.*

ACT ONE

Scene One

*(Le Grand Salon of **CHRYSALE** and **PHILAMENTE**, a bourgeois couple, or in modern terms, upper middle-class. Their home has been decorated in the latest neo-intellectual fashion. Books hang festoon from abundant shelves. Strange scientific equipment seems to be the mode of choice. Among other things that one might see in the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, there is a telescope on the balcony. A skylight, perhaps, is under construction, or already there. Budget permitting, there may be extra servants about who seem to spend more time looking things up instead of cleaning things up. Busts of great philosophers appear prominently, including one of **PHILAMENTE**, not very well executed.)*

*(At rise: **BELISE** is discovered dancing, not very well. She dances with the male servants, who seem to pay no attention to her. **MARTINE** enters as the male servants exit and **BELISE**, frustrated in the lack of attention from the men, pretends **MARTINE** is a man and forces her into a dance. **MARTINE**, who has been subjected to this behavior in the past, wearily accepts, trying to dust and straighten up as **BELISE** dances about with her. **HENRIETTE** enters, watches her aunt for a few moments; the servants and **MARTINE** exit. **BELISE** sees **HENRIETTE**.)*

BELISE.

Hello, my darling!

HENRIETTE.

Aunt Belise!

BELISE.

Come dance!

HENRIETTE.

What dance is this?

BELISE.

The dance of sweet romance!

Or dark and tragic love.

HENRIETTE.

Oh please, let's see

A dance of marital festivity!

*(She takes a piece of lace from the back of a sofa
and turns it into a veil.)*

BELISE.

How lovely, dear. With someone by your side,

You'll make a very, very charming bride.

ARMANDE.

(entering, book in hand)

Well, this is quite a spectacle!

BELISE.

Hello!

ARMANDE.

What's going on in here, I'd like to know.

BELISE.

Come join the dance, my dear, and you will see!

ARMANDE.

No thanks, such foolishness is not for me.

BELISE.

Your sister's far too serious!

HENRIETTE.

Alas.

BELISE.

(seeing her Buddhist teacher in the doorway)

Oh dear, I've got to go, I'm late for class!

(She exits with the teacher. ARMANDE watches

HENRIETTE play with the lace.)

ARMANDE.

What's this about?

HENRIETTE.

What?

ARMANDE.

This! A marriage veil?

HENRIETTE.

Why not?

ARMANDE.

Because you might as well choose jail!

You'd give up all the joys of single life?

HENRIETTE.

I see great joy in being someone's wife.

ARMANDE.

I must sit down. My sister's gone insane.

The very thought!

HENRIETTE.

But why should I restrain

My natural choice?

ARMANDE.

It's vulgar, base and lowly.

HENRIETTE.

The word that springs to mind for me is holy.

ARMANDE.

Ugh. Henriette, you know the great disdain

I feel for marriage!

HENRIETTE.

Please, let me explain.

The images that I would choose to see
Are pleasant ones, of home and family.
Myself, a husband, children in a nest
All filled with love and laughter. Heaven blessed!
And every night in bed, between the sheets,
I'm served a filling feast of nuptial treats.

ARMANDE.

Revolting.

HENRIETTE.

It does not fill me with fright.

ARMANDE.

It's sad, how much your mind won't see the light.

HENRIETTE.

Perhaps, but what's enlightened is my heart.
It doesn't want to spend its life apart
From he who's filled it with such tenderness.
I am in love, I'm guilty, I confess!

ARMANDE.

Good Lord, your mind's in such a low estate
That you are telling me you choose this fate!?
In household's prison, asking to be locked
With spouse and screaming babies!? Well, I'm shocked.
My dear, you must give up this foolish goal.
Through knowledge you will elevate your soul
And leave the burdens of domestic life
To stupid women, who enjoy the strife.
How can you think, when all your time is spent
In housework and domestic argument?
Please, set your mind at high consideration
And think a bit of mother's liberation!
The eyes of learned men are fast upon her,

ARMANDE. (*cont.*)

And not with lust, but deference and honor!
Oh, Henriette, it's truly rapturous
To study differential calculus!
It's hard at first, but what a satisfaction
The first time you make sense of such abstraction!
Read Blaise Pascal on probability,
Boyle's elements and Milton's history,
Or Einstein's relativity—it's thrilling!
Such studies are rewarding and fulfilling.
This wealth of knowledge should inspire you,
And not some man who thinks he might admire you
And make you slave to laws devised by men.
Philosophy must be your husband then.
Its very nature serves to elevate
Our souls to heights at which we may create
Environs where our lust can have no sway,
Where carnal passion can be kept at bay.
Thus, thoughts of pleasure have no ill effects,
And one can turn one's back on... S-E-X.

HENRIETTE.

Sweet sister, from above we've been ordained
With different functions. What is to be gained
From being something I'm not meant to be?
If you want to embrace philosophy,
The heights of worthy, learned speculation,
Then I want to embrace domestication!
Let's not disturb what heaven has arranged;
I don't aspire to have my instincts changed.
I'm happy for you, in your worldly flight,
To great philosophy's stupendous height,
But flying, to me, is one of those things
For which God would endow us all with wings

HENRIETTE. (*cont.*)

If he meant us to fly. So leave me here,
In earthly bliss and pure domestic cheer,
To follow mother in her lesser role,
But one which helps to elevate her soul.

ARMANDE.

If mother's whom you wish to imitate,
Then use her finer parts to illustrate
The model.

HENRIETTE.

But my sister, think on this:
We'd not be here, if not for wedded bliss.
The basest parts of marriage, as you say
Are what gave all of us the light of day,
And I, for one, applaud the time she chose a
Moment to forget Kant and Spinoza.
Accept with grace this marriage that I want,
And soon I may produce a new savant!

ARMANDE.

Well, I'm resigned. You won't give up this plan.
So tell me...

HENRIETTE.

Yes?

ARMANDE.

You know!

ARMANDE.

What?

HENRIETTE.

Who's the man?

HENRIETTE.

My fiancé?

ARMANDE.

Exactly.

HENRIETTE.

Can't you guess?

ARMANDE.

It couldn't be... I mean...it's not...unless...

It isn't my Lycandre?

HENRIETTE.

I confess!

He asked me yesterday and I said yes!

ARMANDE.

But surely you're not serious!

HENRIETTE.

Why not?

You gave him up already, you forgot?

ARMANDE.

Oh no! We're through! It's over, I agree.

But do you think he's gotten over me?

HENRIETTE.

I haven't asked. I don't think he'd deceive me.

He tells me that he's mine alone, believe me.

ARMANDE.

My dear, you're so naïve to think that men

Can love, forget, and then start in again.

HENRIETTE.

You could be right at that. I'll tell you what:

He's coming here. I'll ask him on the spot

Exactly what his feelings are for you.

But if it fits, can you put on the shoe?

ARMANDE.

Of course! Don't be absurd. But can the truth

Be gotten from a silly, shallow youth?

HENRIETTE.

His openness and honesty with me

Have made me trust him quite implicitly.

(CLEANTE enters)

HENRIETTE.

Oh, here he is. Let's ask him right away!

ARMANDE.

No rush. It could be done some other day.

LYCANDRE.

(embracing HENRIETTE, not seeing ARMANDE)

Hello.

HENRIETTE.

Hello.

ARMANDE.

Hello.

LYCANDRE.

Oh. How are you?

HENRIETTE.

My sister has a question.

LYCANDRE.

Oh? You do?

ARMANDE.

No!

HENRIETTE.

She would like to know in which direction
You presently extend your heart's affection.

LYCANDRE.

I—

ARMANDE.

Wait a minute! It's not in my fashion
To listen to a man declare his passion,
And forcing explanations face-to-face
Would be uncomfortable and out of place.

LYCANDRE.

My heart, which may appear to be uncouth
Prefers to cast its fortune with the truth.

LYCANDRE. (*cont.*)

And so, if you will pardon the intrusion,
I'll say my piece and end all this confusion.
I can declare with total certainty...

(*moving to HENRIETTE*)

That this sweet creature's won the heart of me.

(*to ARMANDE*)

Don't say a word, it's you who'd have it so.
Your answer to my lover's plea was no.
Although I gave you full, sufficient proof
Of my sincerity, you stayed aloof.
And so, when I decided to forget
My love for you, I found that Henriette
Was kindly sympathetic to my plight,
Possessing wit and charm, without the bite
I'd heard in your remarks so frequently.
In short, surrounded with gentility,
With soft and soothing womanly support,
Instead of argument and harsh retort,
A quiet, passive acquiescent maid,
Instead of someone always on crusade,
I soon forgot what had me so upset.
How could I help but love my Henriette?
There's no point in attempting to regain
My interest, it would only be in vain.

ARMANDE.

Excuse me, sir, but do you truly dare
Insinuate to me that I still care?
I'd find this conversation too insane,
If not for your remarks, which are inane.

HENRIETTE.

Be gentle, sister! Practice mastery,
Which serves so well to keep our spirits free
From anger's outbursts.

ARMANDE.

Just a moment, please.

It's not my anger you need to appease.
I'm happy for you both, but there's one catch.
Have you informed our parents of this match?
You know, we're subject to parental laws.
In marriage contracts it's that unseen clause,
The one that says the children must agree
To bow to their will and authority.

HENRIETTE.

Oh, be assured, my uppermost intention
Is seeking their approval, as you mention.
Would you my darling, lest they throw a fit
Please speak to them and make our vows legit?

LYCANDRE.

Of course, I'll speak to them without delay.
This afternoon I'll tell them, if I may.

(He moves away.)

ARMANDE.

(to HENRIETTE)

You look as if you think that I'm upset.

HENRIETTE.

Well, are you?

ARMANDE.

No, I've nothing to regret.

HENRIETTE.

Yes, so you've said. Besides, your education
Makes you the mistress of your situation,
And in my heart, I know you'll do your best
To see this marriage well approved and blessed.

ARMANDE.

You speak in such a calm, collected voice,
For someone who is only second choice.

HENRIETTE.

I have a feeling you'd be quite relieved
If his rejected heart could be retrieved
By you.

ARMANDE.

I will not deign to answer that.
I'll take my leave and wish you well...

(as she leaves, to LYCANDRE)

You rat!

LYCANDRE.

Her attitude deserved a frank reply,
But let's discuss our plans instead. I'll try—
I mean, well, you know, I'm a man, and she...
She makes a raving lunatic of me!
That doesn't mean I love her—it's not that,
But did you hear her!? She called me a rat!

HENRIETTE.

Well, are you? Does her anger have foundation?
She seems to cause you undue agitation.

LYCANDRE.

Not I! I mean I hate—

HENRIETTE.

And love and hate
Walk hand in hand. Perhaps we ought to wait.

LYCANDRE.

But why?

HENRIETTE.

Your thoughts seem scattered.

LYCANDRE.

No they don't!

HENRIETTE.

Perhaps you'll change your mind again!

LYCANDRE.

I won't!

You know, it's just my foolish manly pride.

I love you. I want you to be my bride.

HENRIETTE.

You really do?

LYCANDRE.

I do. So, where's your father?

HENRIETTE.

But mother's whom you need to speak to, rather.

She is the one who makes her pleasure law.

His kindly heart's his one endearing flaw.

So, speaking practically, attempt to please—

LYCANDRE.

Your mother?

HENRIETTE.

— As well as my aunt Belise.

LYCANDRE.

Oh God.

HENRIETTE.

I know their eccentricity

Is—

LYCANDRE.

Overblown?

HENRIETTE.

A little flattery

Would guarantee your holding their esteem.

LYCANDRE.

Don't ask me to do that! I wouldn't dream

Of seeming to approve what I do not.

They'd both know I was lying on the spot.

HENRIETTE.

But tell me what about them so offends?

LYCANDRE.

Your mother, and her intellectual friends,
Or pseudo-intellectual, I should say,
Take every opportunity to play
With facts and quotes—oh, how they love to spout
Some new idea they don't know beans about!
These lofty, learned ladies, I have found
Confuse their issues. Or they toss around
Ideas that they just don't comprehend!
A truly learned woman has a blend
Of knowledge, charm, and well-placed common sense,
Plus knowing when to use her innocence
To steal our hearts with gentle thievery
And rule the world with femininity.

HENRIETTE.

Don't let my mother hear you say that word!

LYCANDRE.

My point exactly. She's just too absurd!

HENRIETTE.

Perhaps she is at that, but she's my mother,
And foolishness or not, I'd have no other.
She's lost her reason, temporarily.
Does that mean she's a fool? I disagree.
Nor is my sister. Neither one's to blame.
It's just since Trissotin—

LYCANDRE.

Don't say that name!

HENRIETTE.

Since he came here to stay—

LYCANDRE.

Disgusting snake!

HENRIETTE.

That they've become a little—

LYCANDRE.

Let me take
That pompous head between my hands and crack!

HENRIETTE.

Too overzealous—

LYCANDRE.

Or a mighty whack
Across that rump that sits all day and night,
Pontificating phrases left and right.
She worships him! Dear Monsieur Trissotin,
Who's there to take advantage, when he can,
Of these frustrated females, so impressed
With bad romantic poetry at best.
That's all he ever writes—so trite—so cheap!
I won't say any more...he's such a creep!

HENRIETTE.

That's true, but do not underestimate
That's man's ability to dominate
With devious deception and persuasion.
I've watched in disbelief his swift invasion
Of our home—his artful attitude.
Make no mistake about it—he is shrewd.
But, at the moment, he's my mother's pet.
He lives here as her guest, let's not forget.
And keep in mind, you've come to pay me court,
Which means you must calm down and play the sport!
For if you want to win me for your bride,
You have to win my parents to your side.

LYCANDRE.

All right, I'll try. I still don't understand
How such a dodo got the upper hand!

HENRIETTE.

He woos them with his winsome, winning words.

LYCANDRE.

The man, in point of fact, is for the birds...

HENRIETTE.

Whereas, the naked truth be known to me—

LYCANDRE.

I'd call our present subject talent-free...

HENRIETTE.

But talented enough, with cunning wile—

LYCANDRE.

To charm, enchant, seduce, bewitch, beguile—

HENRIETTE.

A searching group of learned women three—

LYCANDRE.

Who search for love and call it liberty...

HENRIETTE.

But haven't figured out just how to fit—

LYCANDRE.

Into that odor-laden pile of —

HENRIETTE.

Wit!

LYCANDRE.

Touché. Oh look, here comes your Aunt Belise!

What should I say?

HENRIETTE.

Well, I'd attempt to please
Her aging vanity. She'll turn to putty.
Be careful with her. She's a little nutty.

BELISE.

(entering)

Hello, my dear.

HENRIETTE.

Hello, dear aunt. How was
Your Buddhist Scripture lesson?

BELISE.

I'm abuzz
With great vibration, yet an inner peace.

HENRIETTE.

How pleasant.

BELISE.

You should try it too, dear niece.

LYCANDRE.

Good afternoon, madame.

BELISE.

How do you do?

LYCANDRE.

I wonder, may I have a word with you?

BELISE.

Of course!

(She sinks, voluptuously, into a chair.)

LYCANDRE.

Well, I have come here to avow
My love, if you might listen and allow
My heart to speak directly, and to name—

BELISE.

Ah, gently, sir! You speak of love? For shame!
Your eyes must be the sole interpreters
Of what your declaration now infers.
Among my lovers, you may join the ranks.

LYCANDRE.

But madam—

BELISE.

Please, no need to give me thanks.
Regrettably, your sighs are all in vain.
I've told my lovers all, you must restrain
Your burning passion. Seal within your breast
This doomed amour, this deep desire confessed.

LYCANDRE.

I think you've mis—

BELISE.

I have. I've missed your glance.

LYCANDRE.

My glance?

BELISE.

You know, the one racked with romance.

LYCANDRE.

You see, I meant—

BELISE.

NO! Cease these compliments!

I ardently beseech you, hie thee hence!

I banish you forever from my sight.

To speak of love is crude. Be silent, knight.

LYCANDRE.

It's Henriette, madame, who's won my love.

BELISE.

The angels weep upon us from above!

But it cannot be otherwise, you know.

I have my La Fontaine, La Rouchefoucauld,

My quest: the prize of intellectual treasure,

For which one sacrifices earthly treasure.

LYCANDRE.

I swear to you, it's Henriette!

BELISE.

A ploy

To hide your love from me, poor darling boy.

LYCANDRE.

Well, I give up. I'm just not getting through!

BELISE.

Poor dear. The evening star and morning dew

Will weep in brightest mem'ry of this poor

And unrequited love—toujours l'amour!

(she exits. HENRIETTE turns to LYCANDRE and laughs)

LYCANDRE.

Would you please tell me what that was about!?
My patience is undone!

HENRIETTE.

No need to shout!

LYCANDRE.

Well, what's so funny?

HENRIETTE.

You are, darling.

LYCANDRE.

Oh.

It's not like I don't get the joke, you know.
I have a sense of humor, can't you see
How everybody laughs when they're with me?

*(They exit as the music swells and lights dim.
ARISTA and LYCANDRE enter briefly and converse
over music.)*

ARISTA.

Don't worry, lad, I swear to take your part
And speak to you as if straight from your heart!

(LYCANDRE exits.)

How many words a lover finds to say
When one, swift look can easily convey...

(CHRYSALE enters.)

Dear brother, good to see you!

CHRYSALE.

And you too!

You're looking lovely—

ARISTA.

Thank you.

(MARTINE enters and sets a tea tray down.)

CHRYSALE.

Tea!

ARISTA.

What's new?

How is that lawsuit going?

CHRYSALE.

I don't know.

My wife is looking after it.

ARISTA.

Uh-oh.

CHRYSALE.

She's studying the law, to get perspective.

ARISTA.

Good. Let us hope her study is effective.

The new investment bankers?

CHRYSALE.

We shall see.

But tell me, now, what brings you here to me?

ARISTA.

A very pleasant matter, I should say,

And then I must be quickly on my way.

Have you known young Lycandre very long?

CHRYSALE.

My friendship with his father was quite strong.

Before his death we took a tour of Rome...

I see the fellow often here at home.

ARISTA.

And what is your opinion of the lad?

CHRYSALE.

A finer boy no father ever had.

He told me once, in private conversation,

"My son," he said, with glowing adulation,

"Is kind, courageous, well-behaved," he said,

"A bit hot-tempered sometimes, but well-bred."

ARISTA.

He has a fond request which brings me here,
However, I don't want to interfere
In fam'ly matters.

CHRYSALE.

Nonsense, speak your mind.

(BELISE enters, perhaps in a painter's smock or ballet clothes. For each lesson she is going to or coming from, there is another handsome young tutor, budget permitting. She is unseen by CHRYSALE and ARISTA. She waves her tutor away and listens.)

ARISTA.

He tells me that he hopes you will be kind
In thinking of him as a loving mate
For Henriette. It seems that cupid's fat –
al bow has pierced the both of them with love.
It's evident he places her above
All other women he has ever met.
In short, he's smitten—

CHRYSALE.

With my Henriette!

BELISE.

Aha! How quickly do false rumors fly!

CHRYSALE.

How's that?

BELISE.

I happened to be passing by
And felt compelled to clear up this mistake.
One can't afford to err when love's at stake.

ARISTA.

What do you mean?

BELISE.

When lovers are refused,
They lie, to hide the fact their hearts are bruised.

ARISTA.

What lie do you refer to?

BELISE.

One too cruel
To mention—oh the poor unhappy fool!
There's someone else he loves.

CHRYSALE.

No!

ARISTA.

Here we go.

BELISE.

He hides his true affections—I should know.

ARISTA.

Who is it that he loves, then?

BELISE.

Who!?

ARISTA.

Yes, who?

BELISE.

Why me!

CHRYSALE.

I didn't know that.

ARISTA.

Oh, I knew.

BELISE.

Apparently you think it pleasantry.
Just tell me why he wouldn't worship me?
A gentleman must need fulfill his duty
To womankind, by worshipping her beauty,
And mine has captured Hector and Dorante,
Georges, Pierre, Phillipe, also Damis, Cleante,
And darling Stefan.

CHRYSALE.

All these men love you?

BELISE.

You doubt it?

ARISTA.

Sister dear, is it not true
That Hector and Dorante have taken wives?

BELISE.

Of course! To try and save their shattered lives.

CHRYSALE.

Perhaps you can explain and tell me why
Stefan has never called on you.

BELISE.

He's shy.

ARISTA.

Philippe insults you everywhere with cries
Of ridicule.

BELISE.

(thrown for a moment)

He does? Oh how he tries
To hide the burning passion that he feels
But can't declare.

ARISTA.

What all of this reveals,
And what must be our ultimate conclusion,
Is that you are the victim of delusion.
And, hopefully, you'll make a firm decision
To see, dear sister, with a clearer vision.

BELISE.

There's not a thing amiss with my eyesight.
Where love's concerned, I always see the light!

(she exits, sing softly and badly in French)

CHRYSALE.

She always was the different one.

ARISTA.

How true.

Remember all those things she used to do?

CHRYSALE.

There's something we must face, in point of fact.

ARISTA.

Our sister's somewhat loony—

CHRYSALE.

Hell, she's cracked!

But what were we discussing?

ARISTA.

Henriette.

And her young man, Lycandre, don't forget.

CHRYSALE.

Oh yes. Has he a job of any kind?

ARISTA.

Indeed. No thriving fortune, you will find,

But certainly enough to care for two.

CHRYSALE.

Or three?

ARISTA.

I'd swear it. And you know it's true

That honesty and common sense are facets

More important than financial assets.

A yes would speed him straight to heaven's door.

CHRYSALE.

Dear sister, I agree, please say no more!

ARISTA.

I thank you in his name, but this intent

Should be supported by your wife's consent.

CHRYSALE.

I speak for her.

ARISTA.

But brother, is that wise?
Your Philamente does not enjoy surprise.

CHRYSALE.

Leave her to me.

ARISTA.

But—

CHRYSALE.

Please, no apprehension.
Just speak to Henriette of our intention.

ARISTA.

As you desire. I leave it in your hands
To settle as propriety demands.

(She kisses him on the cheek and exits. MARTINE enters, unseen by CHRYSALE, stands in the doorway for a moment before speaking over-dramatically)

MARTINE.

Oh pity me! A servant's life is woe!
One tiny little whoopsie, out you go!

CHRYSALE.

What is the matter? What ails you, Martine?

MARTINE.

What ails me!?

CHRYSALE.

Yes, you're making such a scene!

MARTINE.

I've made a scene, sir, have I?

CHRYSALE.

Yes, you barged
Right in. What's wrong?

MARTINE.

Oh, sir, I've been discharged!

CHRYSALE.

What's this? By whom!?

MARTINE.

By madam!

CHRYSALE.

But what for?

Did you break our good china? Slam a door?
Neglect your duties?

MARTINE.

Sir, I never would!

CHRYSALE.

Well, I declare, you've always been so good!

MARTINE.

I know!

CHRYSALE.

The house has never been so clean!

MARTINE.

I know!

CHRYSALE.

A better maid I've never seen!

MARTINE.

I know!

CHRYSALE.

Who'll make my favorite potage?

MARTINE.

I don't know!

CHRYSALE.

Who will buy the best fromage?

MARTINE.

Not me!

CHRYSALE.

Sew on my buttons, match my socks?

MARTINE.

No more!

CHRYSALE.

And find my keys and wind the clocks?

MARTINE.

Kaput!

CHRYSALE.

And keep my study nice and neat?

(MARTINE *blows her nose twice.*)

At four o'clock, bring me a treat?

MARTINE.

You'll starve!

CHRYSALE.

I'll starve! No pot of tea at three?

MARTINE.

What's more, no more homemade patisserie!

CHRYSALE.

Oh God! Calm down! I'll handle this at once.

Perhaps this is one of Belise's stunts.

(PHILAMENTE *and* BELISE *enter.* PHILAMENTE
sees MARTINE)

PHILAMENTE.

And what is this!? You dare to show your face
To me? Pack your belongings, leave this place!

CHRYSALE.

But dear—

PHILAMENTE.

Not if she begged on bended knees.
I want her thrown right off these premises!

CHRYSALE.

But what has she done wrong?

PHILAMENTE.

So you support
Her crime?

CHRYSALE.

Her crime?

PHILAMENTE.

Do I look like the sort
To fire someone for no reason!?

CHRYSALE.

NO!

Just tell me why you want to let her go.
I must be fair, I think it would be best—

PHILAMENTE.

Then you REFUSE to honor my request?

CHRYSALE.

Oh no!

PHILAMENTE.

Well, wrap up this investigation
Before I'm stricken with acute vexation!

CHRYSALE.

Yes, dear.

(*to MARTINE*)

You wretched wench, I'm in a fit
Over the wicked crime you did commit!

MARTINE.

Explain to me, please, sir, what did I do
To make you yell?

CHRYSALE.

I haven't got a clue!

(*They both look to PHILAMENTE.*)

PHILAMENTE.

Let her tell you.

MARTINE.

But I don't got no notion!

PHILAMENTE.

Aha! You see? And after my devotion
To her refinement and her elocution,
She shakes the fiber of that institution

PHILAMENTE. (*cont.*)

Language, that revered and honored science
With vulgarity.

CHRYSALE.

That's her defiance?
I was afraid she had committed murder!

PHILAMENTE.

And so she did indeed. You should have heard her.

CHRYSALE.

I thought she'd stolen something!

PHILAMENTE.

What is that!?
She wounds me and you give her cheek a pat?
Well? Whose side do you take?

CHRYSALE.

Oh, yours, of course.

PHILAMENTE.

Just look at her! Why she shows no remorse
At all!

MARTINE.

That's very true. I ain't got any.
To me you all talk good, your words are many,
But sayin' what you think makes talkin' grand.
So I'm confused, I just don't understand
Why it's a crime for someone to talk plain.

PHILAMENTE.

PlainLEE.

MARTINE.

PlainLEE.

BELISE.

An undeveloped brain.
She doesn't know an adverb from a skillet.

MARTINE.

But when your stomach's empty mum, I fill it.

CHRYSALE.

Now dear, we may be too insensitive.
Philosophers all say we should forgive
And make allowances for those who err.

PHILAMENTE.

Perhaps a warm apology from her...

CHRYSALE.

She's sorry!

MARTINE.

(aside to him)

No I'm not!

CHRYSALE.

You are!

MARTINE.

Not me!

PHILAMENTE.

With firm assurance that she'll try to be
A little more attentive to her speech,
And put to daily practice what I teach.

CHRYSALE.

She will!

MARTINE.

(aside to him)

I won't!

CHRYSALE.

You want to keep your place?
Or go and join the unemployment race?

MARTINE.

You have a point.

(to PHILAMENTE)

I'm sorry, mum. I'll try
To speak more better.

PHILAMENTE.

Ohh! You'll modify
Your speech and manners, and learn all you can
Under the tutelage of Trissotin?

MARTINE.

Under his what?

PHILAMENTE.

His aegis.

MARTINE.

That's disgusting!
Look here, I'll stick to cooking, cleaning, dusting,
But touch his... AEGIS!!?? Not for all of France.
Do that to keep my job here? Not a chance.

PHILAMENTE.

God help me. What is wrong with Trissotin?

(CHRYSALE *signals to her not to speak.*)

MARTINE.

Why, not a thing.

PHILAMENTE.

A noble, upright man.

MARTINE.

If you say so.

PHILAMENTE.

But what is your critique?

MARTINE.

Ain't got one.

PHILAMENTE.

Come, come, you may plainly speak.

MARTINE.

No I may not!

PHILAMENTE.

In this case I consent.
I want to know exactly what you meant.

MARTINE.

Speak plainLEE? Good, well, plain means honest too.
So, plainly I will tell the truth to you.
Before a certain party came to stay,
This was a happy home in every way.
Oh, sure, you spouted lots of fancy phrases,
And made me fill the vahzes, not the vases,
But that's OK with me, I like to run
With new ideas, once in a while, for fun.
But now the situation's overdone,
And why? Because a certain pompous ass
Sees fit to criticize the lower class!
Berates the way we talk to make himself
Climb high upon his high and mighty shelf!

PHILAMENTE.

To whom do you refer?

MARTINE.

To whoooooom indeed!
A man whose name's a...cinnamon for greed.
You took him in, and here's the awful sin:
You are the one who's being taken in!

PHILAMENTE.

That does it! I was ready to forgive,
But that's the limit! I refuse to live
Under this roof with anyone who can
Say evil things of Monsieur Trissotin!
Well, husband, will you make her leave or not?

CHRYSALE.

Yes dear. Martine, you must leave on the spot.

MARTINE.

I must?

CHRYSALE.

You must.

PHILAMENTE.

Too nice.

CHRYSALE.

(making a feeble attempt)

Go on, get out!

MARTINE.

You're sure?

CHRYSALE.

I'm sure.

PHILAMENTE.

Don't you know how to shout!?

CHRYSALE.

Get out!

MARTINE.

All right.

CHRYSALE.

(aside to her, as she goes)

But wait for me outside.

(MARTINE goes.)

PHILAMENTE.

Well, that was better. Now I'm satisfied.

CHRYSALE.

She was a girl who did her duty well.

What diff'rence if she couldn't speak or spell?

PHILAMENTE.

I'm sorry, but to keep her in my service

And bear her endless errors makes me nervous.

CHRYSALE.

Her crudités for salad were sublime,

So if her verbal crudity's a crime,

She has atoned for it in her cuisine.

Her language and her legumes may be green,

CHRYSALE. *(cont.)*

But when my appetite rears up its voice
The latter, not the former is its choice
For true fulfillment. I could almost cry
To think I shall be forced to say goodbye
To pommes de terre en croute, her bouillabaisse—

BELISE.

Her bouillabaisse?

CHRYSALE.

Oh yes.

BELISE.

Oh, quelle tristesse!

And what about her sauce aux champignons?
The coq au vin? The duck paté!?

CHRYSALE.

All gone!

BELISE.

Quelle tragedie!

PHILAMENTE.

Belise, observe how coarse
Your words are! Do you mean that you endorse
This low, self-centered attitude? How crude
To base one's judgments just on well-cooked food.
Indignity will reign upon the man
Who does not have an intellectual plan
To crush the force of baser, earthly matter.

CHRYSALE.

(aside)

I can't take much more of this senseless chatter!

PHILAMENTE.

What's that you're saying?

CHRYSALE.

Dear, can't we please go
 Once in a while back to the status quo?
 Where servants knew their place and all took care
 Of me, and made an odd meal here and there?
 That lovely time when I was catered to,
 And some of the attention came from you?

BELISE.

Poor brother, dear, I'll cook you something sweet!

CHRYSALE.

(aside)

Oh God forbid!

BELISE.

A tasty tempting treat!

PHILAMENTE.

Belise, we must be off, it's nearly three!

BELISE.

Off where?

PHILAMENTE.

It's time for plane geometry.

BELISE.

(with a look of disaste)

Geometry! Oh, sorry, not today.

Andre est arrivé for my ballet!

(She exits with André. PHILAMENTE exits as well)

CHRYSALE.

This flagrant foolishness will make me speak—
 I can no longer turn the other cheek,
 But must remove the mask and vent my CHOLER!

(holds his ears over the sound of his own yelling)

Now fancy that, they've gone and made me holler.
 Nevertheless, the town has named them fools,

CHRYSALE. *(cont.)*

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