

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Source Text

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Molière, *Tartuffe; Or, The Hypocrite* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

Dramatis Personae

Madame Pernelle — Orgon's mother. A severe old woman who believes Tartuffe is a holy man.

Orgon — Master of the house. A wealthy man who has become completely devoted to Tartuffe.

Elmire — Orgon's second wife. Calm, intelligent, and observant.

Damis — Orgon's son. Hot-tempered and open in his hatred of Tartuffe.

Mariane — Orgon's daughter. Gentle and obedient. She loves Valere.

Cleante — Brother of Elmire. A thoughtful man who speaks with reason and balance.

Tartuffe — A man who pretends to be deeply religious. In truth he is a hypocrite.

Dorine — Mariane's maid. Clever, bold, and sharp-tongued.

M. Loyal — A bailiff.

A Police Officer

Flipotte — Servant of Madame Pernelle.

The scene is in Orgon's house in Paris.

MADAME PERNELLE

Come, Flipotte, come with me. I have stayed here too long already. Let us go at once.

ELMIRE

Mother, please do not hurry so much. Let me at least walk with you to the door.

MADAME PERNELLE

No, daughter-in-law. Stay where you are. I do not need your polite attention.

ELMIRE

But we only wish to show you respect. Why are you leaving in such anger?

MADAME PERNELLE

Because I cannot bear the way things are done in this house. Nothing here is as it should be. No one listens to me. Everyone talks, everyone argues, and there is noise from morning until night. It is complete disorder.

DORINE

If I might say—

MADAME PERNELLE

You might say nothing! You are only a servant girl, yet you chatter more than anyone. You speak as if you were the mistress of the house.

DAMIS

Grandmother, I only wished—

MADAME PERNELLE

And you! You foolish boy. I have told your father a hundred times that you will bring him nothing but trouble.

MARIANE

But grandmother, I think—

MADAME PERNELLE

Ah yes, my quiet little granddaughter. You look so gentle and silent that one might think butter would not melt in your mouth. But I do not trust that quiet face. The quietest waters are often the deepest.

ELMIRE

Mother, surely you judge us too harshly.

MADAME PERNELLE

Your conduct is not what it should be. A mother must set a good example. Your husband's first wife did much better. You dress too richly and care too much for appearances. A modest woman has no need to shine like a princess.

CLEANTE

Madam, allow me to say—

MADAME PERNELLE

Sir, I respect you because you are my daughter-in-law's brother. But if I were my son, I would beg you not to visit this house. Your ideas about life are not proper for decent people.

CLEANTE

You speak very frankly.

MADAME PERNELLE

Yes, that is my way. I never hide my thoughts.

DAMIS

Your friend Tartuffe is fortunate indeed if he finds such a strong defender.

MADAME PERNELLE

He deserves it. He is a holy man. You should all listen to him with respect.

DAMIS

Respect? Must we allow that man to rule this house? Must we ask his permission before we laugh or enjoy ourselves?

DORINE

If we listen to him, everything we do becomes a crime. He criticizes every action.

MADAME PERNELLE

And everything he criticizes deserves criticism. He wishes to guide you toward heaven. My son is wise to trust him.

DAMIS

Nothing will make me tolerate him. I hate the way he behaves. I tell you openly that one day there will be a terrible quarrel between us.

DORINE

And it is shameful that this stranger now acts like master of the house. When he arrived, he had hardly shoes for his feet. Now he judges everything and commands everyone.

MADAME PERNELLE

Heaven sent him here to guide you all.

DORINE

Guide us? In my opinion he is nothing but a hypocrite.

MADAME PERNELLE

What bold speech from a servant!

DORINE

I would not trust him for a moment. Nor that servant of his either.

MADAME PERNELLE

I know nothing about the servant, but I know the master is a saint. If he scolds you, it is because he wishes to save your souls.

DORINE

Then why does he forbid visitors from coming here? Is heaven offended by a friendly visit?

MADAME PERNELLE

These visits bring noise and gossip. Carriages at the door, servants in the street—such things create scandal.

CLEANTE

Madam, people will talk no matter what we do. If we feared every rumor, we would never see our friends again.

DORINE

Indeed, the people who gossip most are usually those whose own behavior is worst.

MADAME PERNELLE

Enough of these arguments. I know a very virtuous lady who disapproves of the company you keep.

DORINE

Yes, she has become very virtuous now that she is old. When she was young and beautiful she behaved quite differently.

MADAME PERNELLE

There! You see the sort of speech that fills this house every day. No one lets me say a word.

She turns toward Elmire.

MADAME PERNELLE

Listen to me. My son did the wisest thing in his life when he welcomed Tartuffe into this house. Heaven sent him to correct you all. You must obey him if you wish to save your souls.

She turns angrily toward the door.

MADAME PERNELLE

These visits, these parties, these balls—they are inventions of the devil. People gather together only to gossip. It is like the Tower of Babylon, where everyone speaks and no one understands.

She sees Cleante smiling slightly.

MADAME PERNELLE

Ah! The gentlemen laugh, do they? Go and laugh somewhere else with fools like yourselves.

She turns again to Elmire.

MADAME PERNELLE

Daughter, goodbye. I have said enough. I will not soon set foot in this house again.

She strikes Flipotte lightly on the arm.

MADAME PERNELLE

Come along, you lazy girl! Why do you stand staring like that? Move!

Madame Pernelle leaves the room with Flipotte.

For a moment the others remain silent. Then Dorine lets out a long breath.

DORINE

Well! That was a storm indeed.

CLEANTE

I am glad I did not walk downstairs with her. She would surely have found another reason to scold me.

DORINE

It is a pity she cannot hear how gently you speak of her now. She would say you are too polite—and that she is not old at all.

CLEANTE

How angry she became with all of us.

DORINE

And all because of Tartuffe. But she is nothing compared with her son.

CLEANTE

You mean Orgon?

DORINE

Yes. Since that man came into the house, our master has changed completely.

CLEANTE

In what way?

DORINE

He loves Tartuffe more than his own family. More than his wife, more than his children. He tells him every secret and asks his advice about everything.

CLEANTE

That is difficult to believe.

DORINE

At table Tartuffe must sit in the place of honor. Our master watches with joy while he eats enough for six men. If Tartuffe even sneezes, our master cries out, "Heaven bless you!"

CLEANTE

Extraordinary devotion.

DORINE

He quotes Tartuffe's words like sacred law. Every small action becomes a miracle in his eyes. And Tartuffe knows exactly how to take advantage of him.

CLEANTE

So the man is clever.

DORINE

Very clever. With his talk of religion he receives money again and again. He even dares to criticize us all.

CLEANTE

And you must endure it.

DORINE

Endure it? Even his servant lectures us! He throws away our ribbons and says they are sinful decorations. The other day he tore up a handkerchief he found inside a religious book and called it a terrible crime.

CLEANTE

Your house has certainly changed since this Tartuffe arrived.

DORINE

Changed? He rules it.

CLEANTE

Then I understand the anger of Madame Pernelle. She sees the house through Tartuffe's eyes.

DORINE

Exactly.

At that moment footsteps are heard outside.

DORINE

Hush. I think the master has returned.

Part 2

ORGON

Ah! Brother Cleante, good morning.

CLEANTE

I was just leaving, but I am glad to greet you.

ORGON

Wait a moment, please. Before you go, let me ask some questions. I have been away for two days, and I wish to know how everything has gone in my absence.

He turns to Dorine.

ORGON

Dorine, tell me the news of the house. Has everything been well? How is everyone?

DORINE

Madam Elmire had a fever the day before yesterday. She suffered from a terrible headache all day.

ORGON

And Tartuffe?

DORINE

Tartuffe? He is very well. Strong, fat, and rosy.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

In the evening Madam Elmire felt so sick she could not eat anything.

ORGON

And Tartuffe?

DORINE

He ate very well. Two fine partridges and half a leg of mutton.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

All night Madam could not sleep because of the fever. We had to sit beside her until morning.

ORGON

And Tartuffe?

DORINE

After supper he went quietly to his room, lay down in a warm bed, and slept peacefully until morning.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

At last we persuaded Madam to allow the doctor to bleed her. After that she felt much better.

ORGON

And Tartuffe?

DORINE

He recovered his strength bravely and drank four large glasses of wine at breakfast.

ORGON

Poor man!

DORINE

Now both of them are well. I will go and tell Madam how happy you are to hear of her recovery.

She leaves.

CLEANTE watches Orgon for a moment with a thoughtful expression.

CLEANTE

Brother, she laughs at you openly.

ORGON

What do you mean?

CLEANTE

I mean that your devotion to this man astonishes everyone. Has there ever been such blindness? Can a stranger charm you so much that you forget your own family?

ORGON

Stop there, brother. You do not know the man you speak of.

CLEANTE

Perhaps not. But I see enough to judge his influence.

ORGON

Ah! If you knew him as I do, you would admire him deeply. He is a man—how shall I say it?—a man who brings peace to the soul. Whoever follows his guidance finds perfect calm.

CLEANTE

That is a remarkable claim.

ORGON

His conversation has changed my whole life. He has taught me to detach my heart from the things of this world. Friends, family, wealth—these mean nothing now beside the will of Heaven.

CLEANTE

Nothing at all?

ORGON

Nothing. I could see my brother, my children, my mother, even my wife die—and I would not be troubled.

CLEANTE

Those are very humane feelings indeed.

ORGON

Ah, brother! If you had seen him when I first met him, you would understand.

CLEANTE

Tell me then.

ORGON

Every day he came to church. He knelt opposite me with such humility that all eyes turned toward him. He sighed deeply, prayed with passion, and kissed the floor again and again.

CLEANTE

Very impressive.

ORGON

When the service ended, he hurried to the door before me and offered me holy water. I asked his servant about him and learned that he was very poor.

CLEANTE

And you helped him.

ORGON

Yes. I gave him money. But in his modesty he always tried to return part of it.

CLEANTE

That is convenient modesty.

ORGON

He would say, "It is too much. I am not worthy of such kindness." When I refused to take it back, he would give it to the poor before my eyes.

CLEANTE

A very careful display of charity.

ORGON

At last Heaven inspired me to bring him into my home. Since that day everything has prospered here.

CLEANTE

Except the peace of the household.

ORGON

He watches over everything for my good. He even takes a special interest in my wife. If any man looks at her with admiration, Tartuffe tells me at once. His jealousy for my honor is greater than my own.

CLEANTE

How touching.

ORGON

You would not believe the depth of his conscience. The smallest fault troubles him.

CLEANTE

For example?

ORGON

The other day he accused himself of sin because, during prayer, he killed a flea in a moment of anger.

CLEANTE stares at him.

CLEANTE

Brother, forgive me, but you must be joking.

ORGON

Not at all.

CLEANTE

Then I fear you are the victim of a dangerous illusion.

ORGON

Your words sound very close to atheism.

CLEANTE

Not at all. I respect true religion deeply.

ORGON

You criticize a man who lives in holiness.

CLEANTE

No. I criticize hypocrisy.

ORGON

Hypocrisy?

CLEANTE

Yes. There are false devotees just as there are false heroes. True virtue is quiet. It does not shout about itself.

ORGON

You speak like a philosopher.

CLEANTE

No. I speak like a reasonable man.

He walks slowly across the room.

CLEANTE

Look around you. There are men of genuine devotion. They do not boast. They do not judge every action of others. They live modestly and quietly. Their religion is gentle and humane.

ORGON

And Tartuffe is not such a man?

CLEANTE

I doubt it very much.

ORGON

You doubt because you do not know him.

CLEANTE

Perhaps. But I know the signs of sincerity. The truly devout man does not advertise his holiness. He does not seek influence or power through religion. He does not condemn everyone around him.

ORGON

You are very certain of your wisdom.

CLEANTE

Not wisdom—experience.

ORGON

You believe yourself the only man who understands the truth.

CLEANTE

Not at all. I only say there is a difference between sincerity and pretence.

ORGON folds his arms impatiently.

ORGON

Have you finished your sermon?

CLEANTE

Yes.

ORGON

Good. Then allow me to end the discussion.

He turns as if to leave.

CLEANTE

Wait a moment. There is another matter.

ORGON stops.

CLEANTE

You once promised your daughter Mariane to Valere.

ORGON

Yes.

CLEANTE

You even fixed the day for the wedding.

ORGON

That is true.

CLEANTE

Then why is the marriage delayed?

ORGON

I cannot say.

CLEANTE

Do you have another plan?

ORGON

Perhaps.

CLEANTE

You intend to break your promise?

ORGON

I did not say that.

CLEANTE

Valere sent me to ask your decision. What answer shall I take him?

ORGON shrugs.

ORGON

Any answer you like.

CLEANTE

But we must know your intention.

ORGON

My intention is to do the will of Heaven.

CLEANTE

Come now. Speak plainly.

ORGON

Goodbye, brother.

He turns and walks away.

CLEANTE watches him go.

CLEANTE

This affair grows dangerous. I must warn Valere at once.

Part 3

ORGON

Mariane, come here. I wish to speak with you.

MARIANE

Yes, father.

ORGON looks around the room carefully.

ORGON

Wait a moment. I want to be sure no one is listening.

He opens a small closet door and looks inside.

ORGON

Good. No one is hiding there.

He closes the door and turns back to his daughter.

ORGON

Mariane, you have always been a gentle and obedient daughter. For that reason I have always loved you very dearly.

MARIANE

I am grateful for your kindness, father.

ORGON

Good. Now prove that you deserve it. A daughter must obey her father in everything.

MARIANE

Nothing would make me happier than to do your will.

ORGON nods with satisfaction.

ORGON

Excellent. Now tell me—what do you think of Tartuffe?

MARIANE

Of Tartuffe?

ORGON

Yes. Be careful how you answer.

MARIANE

I will say whatever you wish me to say.

ORGON

Very good. Then say this: that Tartuffe is a man of great merit, that he has won your heart, and that you would be happy if I chose him as your husband.

MARIANE stares at him.

MARIANE

Father... what did you say?

ORGON

I said that Tartuffe shall be your husband.

MARIANE

I beg your pardon, father. Surely I did not hear you correctly.

ORGON

You heard me perfectly.

MARIANE

You wish me to marry Tartuffe?

ORGON

Yes.

MARIANE

But father, that cannot be true! Why would you ask me to say such a thing?

ORGON

Because I intend it to be the truth. I have decided that Tartuffe will become a

member of our family.

MARIANE

You mean... you truly wish me to marry him?

ORGON

Yes. And since it is your duty to obey me—

At that moment Dorine quietly enters the room and stands behind Orgon without being noticed.

ORGON continues.

ORGON

—you must accept my choice.

MARIANE remains silent in shock.

DORINE suddenly speaks.

DORINE

Sir, I must say that this story sounds very strange.

ORGON turns quickly.

ORGON

What are you doing here, Dorine?

DORINE

I heard a rumor about this marriage and came to learn whether it was true. I thought it must be nonsense.

ORGON

Why nonsense?

DORINE

Because such a plan is impossible.

ORGON

I assure you it is very possible.

DORINE

No, sir. You are joking.

ORGON

I am perfectly serious.

DORINE

No one will believe it.

ORGON

I know a way to make people believe.

DORINE

You are telling us a fairy tale.

ORGON

I am telling you exactly what will soon happen.

DORINE

Impossible!

ORGON turns to MARIANE.

ORGON

Daughter, what I say is final.

DORINE laughs.

DORINE

Do not listen to him, Mariane. Your father is only amusing himself.

ORGON

I tell you—

DORINE

No, no. No one will believe you.

ORGON

If you continue speaking like that—

DORINE

Then we must believe you... and the worse for you it will be. Can a grown man with such a large beard truly be foolish enough to do such a thing?

ORGON grows angry.

ORGON

You are becoming far too familiar in this house. I do not like it.

DORINE

Please do not be angry, sir. But are you not making a joke of everyone? Your daughter is not meant to marry a religious hypocrite. And besides, what would

you gain from such a match?

ORGON

Silence!

DORINE

How can a rich man like you choose a poor beggar for his son-in-law?

ORGON

You know nothing. The less wealth he has, the more honor he deserves. His poverty is noble poverty. He has given up worldly riches for heaven.

DORINE

So he says.

ORGON

With my help he may recover his fortune. I have heard that he once possessed a fine estate.

DORINE

Indeed? He tells that story himself, I suppose.

ORGON

He is a gentleman.

DORINE

Then why does he boast about his birth? True piety is humble.

ORGON

Enough!

DORINE

Let us leave his family and speak only of the man himself. Can you really give such a husband to your daughter? Think of the scandal!

ORGON

I do not ask your opinion.

DORINE

A woman forced into marriage may become desperate. Even a virtuous girl might rebel if she is given to a man she hates.

ORGON turns to MARIANE.

ORGON

You see? I must learn my duty from a servant!

DORINE

You could do worse than follow my advice.

ORGON

Daughter, we will waste no more time. I know what is best for you. Yes, I once promised you to Valere. But I have learned things about him.

DORINE

What things?

ORGON

They say he likes gambling.

DORINE

Who says so?

ORGON

And I fear his faith is weak.

DORINE

Meaning that he does not go to church exactly when you do?

ORGON

I did not ask for your comment!

DORINE

People who go to church only to be seen are not always the most devout.

ORGON

Enough! Tartuffe, on the other hand, is favored by Heaven. That is wealth beyond all others.

DORINE

Of course.

ORGON

With him you will live in perfect peace.

DORINE

Yes—perfect peace indeed.

ORGON

You will live like two faithful lovers, like two turtle doves.

DORINE

Two turtle doves?

ORGON

You will never quarrel.

DORINE

Never?

ORGON

You may do whatever you wish with him.

DORINE

Oh yes. She will give him horns, no doubt.

ORGON

Silence!

DORINE

I tell you plainly—he is made for such a fate.

ORGON

Stop interrupting!

DORINE

I only wish to help you.

ORGON

I do not need your help!

DORINE

But your honor concerns me.

ORGON

Be quiet!

DORINE

It would be a sin to allow this marriage.

ORGON

Silence, you insolent girl!

DORINE

What! A holy man like you losing your temper?

ORGON

Your nonsense drives me mad! I forbid you to speak another word.

DORINE crosses her arms.

DORINE

Very well. I shall remain silent and think instead.

ORGON turns again to MARIANE.

ORGON

Daughter, I have considered everything carefully. Tartuffe may not be handsome, but—

DORINE whispers to herself.

DORINE

What a charming face!

ORGON turns sharply.

ORGON

Did you speak?

DORINE

No. I was talking to myself.

ORGON glares at her.

ORGON

Very well. Continue talking to yourself—but not to me.

He turns back to MARIANE.

ORGON

You must obey me. I command you to accept Tartuffe as your husband.

DORINE suddenly runs toward the door.

DORINE

You will never make her marry such a creature!

ORGON raises his hand as if to strike her, but she escapes.

ORGON

That insolent girl will drive me to sin! I cannot discuss anything while she is here.

He walks toward the door angrily.

ORGON

My mind is too disturbed. I must go out and calm myself with a walk.

He leaves the room.

For a moment MARIANE stands motionless.

DORINE returns and looks at her in astonishment.

DORINE

What is the matter with you? Have you lost your tongue? They propose the most absurd marriage in the world, and you say nothing!

Part 4

MARIANE

What could I say? My father is the master of the house.

DORINE

And must that stop you from defending yourself?

MARIANE

But what can I do?

DORINE

Everything! Tell him plainly that love cannot be ordered like a servant. Tell him you will marry for yourself, not for him. If he admires Tartuffe so much, let him marry him himself.

MARIANE

Dorine, you speak too boldly. A daughter must respect her father's authority. I could never oppose him openly.

DORINE

Respect is one thing. Ruining your life is another.

MARIANE lowers her eyes.

DORINE

Let us speak plainly. Valere has asked for your hand. Do you love him or not?

MARIANE

Dorine! How can you ask such a question? Have I not told you a hundred times what I feel?

DORINE

Words are easy. I want to know if your heart truly belongs to him.

MARIANE

Yes. I love him with all my heart.

DORINE

And he loves you?

MARIANE

I believe so.

DORINE

And both of you wish to marry?

MARIANE

Of course.

DORINE

Then what do you intend to do about this other marriage?

MARIANE

If my father forces it... I shall die.

DORINE throws up her hands.

DORINE

Die! What a brilliant solution! Yes, that will fix everything nicely. Just die and the problem disappears.

MARIANE

You mock me when I am suffering.

DORINE

Because you talk nonsense. Instead of fighting, you collapse like a weak soldier at the first blow.

MARIANE

But what would you have me do?

DORINE

Show courage!

MARIANE

My father's authority is very strong.

DORINE

And your love is very weak, it seems.

MARIANE

Do you doubt my love for Valere?

DORINE

Love without courage is useless.

MARIANE

Is it not his duty to defend me? Should he not speak to my father?

DORINE

If your father has lost his senses and worships Tartuffe like a saint, what can your lover do?

MARIANE

Must I declare openly that I love Valere? Must I throw aside all modesty?

DORINE

I ask nothing. You may marry Tartuffe if you like.

MARIANE looks up in alarm.

DORINE continues calmly.

DORINE

Yes, marry him. It is an excellent match.

MARIANE

Dorine!

DORINE

What could be better? Monsieur Tartuffe! A most distinguished husband!

MARIANE

Please stop.

DORINE

He is noble—at least in his village. Handsome too. Look at those red ears and that rosy face.

MARIANE covers her face.

MARIANE

You are cruel.

DORINE

You will be extremely happy, I am sure.

MARIANE

Dorine, I beg you. Help me find a way to prevent this marriage. I will do anything you say.

DORINE pauses.

DORINE

No. You must obey your father.

MARIANE

Dorine!

DORINE

Yes. If he orders you to marry a monkey, you must obey.

MARIANE

You know I trust you. Do not abandon me now.

DORINE pretends to think.

DORINE

Very well. Since you insist... I suppose I must help you.

MARIANE takes her hand eagerly.

MARIANE

Thank you!

DORINE

But do not be afraid. We will find a way.

MARIANE

What shall we do?

DORINE

First, delay. Delay is the best weapon. If you gain time, many things may happen.

MARIANE

But how?

DORINE

You can pretend illness. You can say that bad omens have appeared. Perhaps you dreamed something terrible. Perhaps a mirror broke. There are a hundred excuses.

MARIANE

Yes...

DORINE

Besides, no one can marry you without your consent. You must say the word “yes.”

MARIANE

That is true.

DORINE

And you must not say it.

At that moment a young man enters.

DORINE

Ah! Here is Valere himself.

VALERE approaches with a serious expression.

VALERE

Madam, I have just heard an interesting piece of news.

MARIANE

What news?

VALERE

That you are to marry Tartuffe.

MARIANE looks down.

MARIANE

My father has indeed spoken of such a plan.

VALERE

Your father said so?

MARIANE

Yes. He told me only a moment ago.

VALERE

Seriously?

MARIANE

Quite seriously.

VALERE

And what is your decision?

MARIANE

I do not know.

VALERE looks at her in surprise.

VALERE

You do not know?

MARIANE

No.

VALERE

Then allow me to advise you.

MARIANE

Please do.

VALERE

Marry him.

MARIANE looks at him sharply.

MARIANE

That is your advice?

VALERE

Yes.

MARIANE

You truly mean it?

VALERE

Of course. It is a splendid match.

MARIANE

Very well, sir. I shall follow your advice.

VALERE

You will find it easy to follow.

MARIANE

As easy as it was for you to give.

VALERE

I only gave it to please you.

MARIANE

And I shall follow it to please you.

DORINE moves quietly to the back of the room and watches them.

DORINE

Let us see where this quarrel goes.

VALERE

So this is your love?

MARIANE

Please say no more.

VALERE

You asked my advice, and I gave it.

MARIANE

Yes, you told me to marry Tartuffe. And I will do exactly that.

VALERE

Do not hide behind my words. You had already decided to betray me.

MARIANE

Exactly so.

VALERE

Then your love was false from the beginning.

MARIANE

You are free to think so.

VALERE

My wounded pride will not remain silent. I shall offer my hand elsewhere.

MARIANE

You will certainly find someone worthy of you.

VALERE

I know a woman who will gladly accept what you reject.

MARIANE

Then you will easily forget me.

VALERE

I shall try. A man must preserve his dignity.

MARIANE

A noble sentiment indeed.

VALERE

Would you have me continue loving you while you marry another?

MARIANE

Certainly not.

VALERE

Then I shall do exactly as you wish.

He turns toward the door.

MARIANE

Very well.

VALERE stops and turns back.

VALERE

Remember—it was you who forced me to this decision.

MARIANE

Of course.

VALERE

I merely follow your example.

MARIANE

Yes.

VALERE moves toward the door again.

VALERE

Goodbye, madam.

MARIANE

Goodbye, sir.

DORINE rushes forward.

DORINE

Stop! Have you both lost your senses?

She grabs VALERE by the arm.

DORINE

Where are you going?

VALERE

Leave me alone.

DORINE

Not a chance.

MARIANE turns away sadly.

DORINE runs after her and pulls her back as well.

DORINE

And where are you going?

MARIANE

Let me go.

DORINE drags both of them to the center of the room.

DORINE

Now listen to me, both of you. You behave like two children.

VALERE

Did you not hear what she said?

DORINE

And did you not hear what you said?

She points first to VALERE, then to MARIANE.

DORINE

She loves no one but you.

Then she points to MARIANE.

DORINE

And he loves no one but you.

MARIANE looks at VALERE.

MARIANE

Then why did you advise me to marry Tartuffe?

VALERE

Why did you ask my advice?

DORINE

Enough! Give me your hands.

VALERE hesitates.

VALERE

Why?

DORINE

Because I say so.

He gives her his hand.

DORINE

Now you.

MARIANE slowly gives her hand.

DORINE joins their hands together.

DORINE

There. You love each other more than you admit.

For a moment the two lovers stand silently holding hands.

VALERE finally looks at MARIANE.

VALERE

Come now... do not look at me as if you hated me.

MARIANE glances at him shyly and smiles slightly.

DORINE shakes her head.

DORINE

Ah, lovers! What foolish creatures they are.

Part 5

VALERE

But tell me honestly, Mariane. Have I not reason to complain? Was it not cruel of you to say things that wounded me so deeply?

MARIANE

And you? Were you not ungrateful to speak as if my love meant nothing?

DORINE

Enough! This is not the moment for lovers' quarrels. You must think of something far more important.

VALERE

What do you mean?

DORINE

The marriage with Tartuffe.

MARIANE

Yes. We must find a way to stop it.

DORINE

Exactly. Your father is blinded by madness, and this plan is pure nonsense.

She turns to Mariane.

DORINE

For the moment, you must pretend to obey him.

MARIANE

Pretend?

DORINE

Yes. Act as if you agree with his wishes. If you resist too strongly, he will only become more stubborn.

VALERE

That is true.

DORINE

If you appear obedient, you can gain time. And time is our greatest ally.

MARIANE

But how can we delay the wedding?

DORINE

There are many ways. One day you may claim illness. Another day you may speak of bad dreams or unlucky signs.

VALERE

Yes...

DORINE

You might say you met a funeral in the street, or that a mirror broke in your room. People take such things seriously.

MARIANE

That might work.

DORINE

Most important of all, no one can marry you without your consent. Remember that.

VALERE

That is comforting.

DORINE

While you delay, we shall work behind the scenes.

She points to VALERE.

DORINE

You must speak with your friends. They should remind Orgon of his promise to you.

VALERE

I will do it immediately.

DORINE

Good. And we will persuade Cleante to speak again with Orgon.

MARIANE

My uncle may succeed where others fail.

DORINE

And Elmire as well. Your stepmother has influence over your father.

VALERE

Perhaps she can open his eyes.

DORINE

Exactly. We will surround him with reason until his madness disappears.

MARIANE looks at VALERE with renewed hope.

MARIANE

Then there is still a chance.

VALERE

Yes. But remember, my greatest hope lies in you.

MARIANE

Whatever happens, no one but you shall ever be my husband.

VALERE takes her hand again.

VALERE

Your words fill me with joy.

DORINE claps her hands sharply.

DORINE

Enough! Lovers can talk forever. Time is precious.

She pushes VALERE toward the door.

DORINE

Go now.

VALERE

Just one more word—

DORINE

No more words!

She pushes him again.

DORINE

Out! Quickly!

VALERE finally leaves.

DORINE turns to MARIANE and pushes her gently toward the opposite door.

DORINE

And you, madam, must go this way.

MARIANE

Very well.

She pauses a moment.

MARIANE

Dorine... thank you.

DORINE

Go, go. Leave the thinking to me.

MARIANE exits.

DORINE stands alone for a moment, thinking.

DORINE

This house is full of trouble. But perhaps we can still save it.

She exits.

Soon after, Damis enters quickly, his face full of anger.

DAMIS

If I do not stop this villain immediately, I deserve to be called a coward!

DORINE returns and sees him.

DORINE

What now? Why are you so furious?

DAMIS

I swear I will expose Tartuffe before everyone!

DORINE

Calm yourself.

DAMIS

Calm myself? Never!

DORINE

Listen to me. Your father has only spoken of this marriage. Nothing is certain yet.

DAMIS

That is enough for me. I will confront that hypocrite today.

DORINE

And ruin everything with your temper.

DAMIS

I cannot remain silent.

DORINE

You must. Your stepmother has already planned something.

DAMIS

What plan?

DORINE

Elmire intends to speak privately with Tartuffe. She wishes to discover his true intentions.

DAMIS

And you trust that man to reveal them?

DORINE

I suspect something interesting may happen.

DAMIS

What do you mean?

DORINE

I believe Tartuffe has feelings that are not entirely holy.

DAMIS

What feelings?

DORINE lowers her voice.

DORINE

Feelings for Elmire.

DAMIS

What!

DORINE

Yes. If that is true, his hypocrisy will soon be revealed.

DAMIS

Then I must hear what he says.

DORINE

No. Leave it to Elmire.

DAMIS

Impossible. I will hide and listen.

DORINE

That is a terrible idea.

DAMIS

I promise to remain silent.

DORINE

Your temper will betray you.

DAMIS

No. This time I swear I will control myself.

DORINE sighs.

DORINE

Very well. But if you ruin everything, do not blame me.

DAMIS

Where shall I hide?

DORINE points to a small closet at the back of the room.

DORINE

There. Behind that door.

DAMIS

Perfect.

He quickly enters the closet and leaves the door slightly open.

DORINE stands waiting.

DORINE

Now we must wait for Tartuffe.

After a moment footsteps are heard.

DORINE

He is coming.

TARTUFFE enters the room.

He speaks toward the door behind him, addressing his servant.

TARTUFFE

Laurent, put away my hair shirt and my whip of penance. Pray that Heaven will grant you its grace.

He adjusts his clothes with exaggerated humility.

TARTUFFE

If anyone comes to see me, tell them I have gone to distribute charity among the poor prisoners.

DORINE watches him with a smile.

DORINE

What wonderful piety.

TARTUFFE finally notices her.

TARTUFFE

What do you want?

DORINE

Madam Elmire wishes to speak with you.

TARTUFFE suddenly pulls a handkerchief from his pocket.

TARTUFFE

Before you say another word, please take this handkerchief.

DORINE

Why?

TARTUFFE

Cover that bosom. Such sights disturb the soul and lead the mind toward sinful thoughts.

DORINE laughs.

DORINE

Is temptation so powerful for you?

TARTUFFE

Modesty, please.

DORINE

Strange. I am not so easily tempted. I could see you from head to foot and feel nothing at all.

TARTUFFE

Your speech lacks modesty.

DORINE

Very well. I will say no more. Madam Elmire will be here in a moment.

TARTUFFE immediately changes his tone.

TARTUFFE

Ah! I shall be delighted to see her.

DORINE smiles to herself.

DORINE

So gentle all at once.

ELMIRE enters the room.

DORINE quietly exits.

Part 6

ELMIRE

Heaven grant you good health and peace, Monsieur Tartuffe.

TARTUFFE

Madam, may Heaven pour its blessings upon you and preserve both your body and your soul.

ELMIRE

You are very kind. But please, let us sit down and speak comfortably.

They sit.

TARTUFFE

I hope your illness has completely disappeared.

ELMIRE

Yes, the fever has passed.

TARTUFFE

My prayers were constantly directed toward your recovery.

ELMIRE

You care too much for my health.

TARTUFFE

One cannot care too much for something so precious. I would gladly have sacrificed my own health to restore yours.

ELMIRE smiles politely.

ELMIRE

That is taking charity very far.

TARTUFFE

You deserve far more than I can offer.

ELMIRE pauses for a moment.

ELMIRE

There is a matter I wished to discuss with you privately. I am glad that no one else is here to listen.

Behind the closet door DAMIS slowly opens it a little and listens.

TARTUFFE

Madam, I am delighted to find myself alone with you. It is an opportunity for which I have long prayed.

ELMIRE

All I ask is that you speak openly and honestly with me.

TARTUFFE

That is exactly my wish.

ELMIRE

People say my husband intends to break his promise and give my daughter Mariane to you in marriage. Is that true?

TARTUFFE

He has mentioned such an idea.

ELMIRE

And what do you think of it?

TARTUFFE lowers his eyes in a display of humility.

TARTUFFE

Madam, that is not the happiness for which my heart longs.

ELMIRE

No?

TARTUFFE

There are charms elsewhere that attract my heart far more strongly.

ELMIRE raises her eyebrows slightly.

ELMIRE

I believed you had no interest in earthly beauty.

TARTUFFE

The heart is not made of stone.

ELMIRE

I thought your love was directed only toward Heaven.

TARTUFFE leans slightly closer.

TARTUFFE

Love for eternal beauty does not destroy our admiration for beauty on earth.

ELMIRE

Indeed?

TARTUFFE

Heaven shows its glory through its creations. And in you, madam, Heaven has placed its most perfect work.

ELMIRE remains calm.

TARTUFFE continues, growing more passionate.

TARTUFFE

When I first saw you, I trembled. I feared that my feelings were sinful. I tried to avoid you and to drive the thought from my heart.

ELMIRE

But you did not succeed?

TARTUFFE

No. At last I understood that such love could be pure and innocent. Heaven itself must have inspired it.

ELMIRE

That is a convenient explanation.

TARTUFFE

Madam, it is true. Your beauty has conquered my soul.

He gently takes her hand.

TARTUFFE

You are my hope and my happiness. My peace or my despair depends entirely upon you.

ELMIRE pulls her hand away slightly.

ELMIRE

Your declaration is very gallant. But it surprises me.

TARTUFFE

Why so?

ELMIRE

A man known everywhere for his piety should be more careful with his heart.

TARTUFFE

Madam, I am still a man. And when a man sees such beauty, he cannot remain indifferent.

ELMIRE

Perhaps not.

TARTUFFE

If my confession offends you, blame only your own charms.

ELMIRE

You are very bold.

TARTUFFE

My love hopes only for your kindness. If you show me mercy, I will devote myself to you completely.

ELMIRE watches him closely.

TARTUFFE

And you need not fear scandal. I am discreet.

ELMIRE

Are you?

TARTUFFE

Those fashionable men who boast of their adventures would shout their victories to the whole world. But men like me guard their secrets carefully.

ELMIRE

How reassuring.

TARTUFFE

Your honor will be perfectly safe with me.

ELMIRE suddenly speaks with a slightly more serious tone.

ELMIRE

Tell me, Monsieur Tartuffe... do you not fear that I might repeat this conversation to my husband?

TARTUFFE smiles calmly.

TARTUFFE

Madam, you are too generous to betray me.

ELMIRE

And if I did?

TARTUFFE

Then I would rely upon your kindness. You would forgive a moment of human weakness.

ELMIRE stands and walks slowly across the room.

ELMIRE

Some women might tell their husbands immediately.

TARTUFFE rises as well.

TARTUFFE

But you are wiser than most women.

ELMIRE turns toward him.

ELMIRE

Perhaps.

She pauses thoughtfully.

ELMIRE

Very well. I will not speak of this conversation.

TARTUFFE bows deeply.

TARTUFFE

Your generosity overwhelms me.

ELMIRE

But in return I ask something of you.

TARTUFFE

Anything within my power.

ELMIRE

You must persuade my husband to allow the marriage of Mariane and Valere.

TARTUFFE stiffens slightly.

ELMIRE

You have great influence over him. If you truly care for my peace of mind, you will help them.

TARTUFFE hesitates.

TARTUFFE

Madam... that matter requires careful thought.

ELMIRE

There is nothing difficult about it. Simply speak to him honestly.

TARTUFFE slowly moves closer again.

TARTUFFE

Everything depends upon your kindness toward me.

ELMIRE

What do you mean?

TARTUFFE

If you favor me... I will gladly serve your wishes.

ELMIRE understands his meaning but remains composed.

ELMIRE

You ask a great deal.

TARTUFFE

Love demands courage.

ELMIRE pretends to consider his words.

ELMIRE

Very well. But such matters must remain secret.

TARTUFFE

Completely secret.

ELMIRE

And my husband must never know.

TARTUFFE

Never.

Behind the closet door DAMIS listens with growing anger.

ELMIRE speaks again.

ELMIRE

Then let us continue this conversation another time.

TARTUFFE bows deeply again.

TARTUFFE

I live only for your happiness.

ELMIRE nods politely.

TARTUFFE exits.

The moment he leaves, DAMIS bursts out of the closet.

DAMIS

Ah! The villain! Now I have heard everything!

Part 7

DAMIS

The scoundrel! Now his hypocrisy is exposed. I heard every word he said.

ELMIRE

What are you doing here?

DAMIS

I was hiding in the closet. I wanted to hear what he would say to you.

ELMIRE

That was very unwise.

DAMIS

Unwise? No! It was necessary. Now we have proof of his wickedness.

ELMIRE

Be careful. If you accuse him too quickly, your father may not believe you.

DAMIS

He will believe me this time. I will repeat every word that man spoke.

ELMIRE

Your father is blinded by admiration for Tartuffe. Anger will only make things worse.

DAMIS

I cannot remain silent.

ELMIRE

Listen to me. Leave this matter to me. I will find a better way to reveal the truth.

DAMIS

No! I will go to my father at once.

ELMIRE tries to stop him.

ELMIRE

DamIS, wait—

But he has already rushed toward the door.

ELMIRE

This will end badly.

Moments later ORGON enters the room with TARTUFFE.

ORGON

Brother Tartuffe, come with me. I wish my son to hear your advice.

DAMIS immediately steps forward.

DAMIS

Father, I have something important to tell you.

ORGON

What is it?

DAMIS points angrily at TARTUFFE.

DAMIS

That man is a hypocrite!

ORGON is shocked.

ORGON

What did you say?

DAMIS

He pretends to be holy, but he is a villain.

ORGON

Take care of your words!

DAMIS

I heard everything with my own ears. He declared his love to Elmire and tried to persuade her to betray you.

ORGON turns toward TARTUFFE.

ORGON

What is this accusation?

TARTUFFE lowers his head humbly.

TARTUFFE

Alas... Heaven knows how weak the human heart can be.

ORGON

Explain yourself.

TARTUFFE

Yes, I am a sinner. I am guilty of many faults. If your son accuses me, I deserve it.

DAMIS

You see! He admits it!

TARTUFFE

But I ask only for forgiveness.

ORGON suddenly becomes angry.

ORGON

DAMIS! How dare you insult such a virtuous man!

DAMIS

What?

ORGON

You accuse him falsely!

DAMIS

Father, I heard him confess his love to Elmire!

ELMIRE steps forward.

ELMIRE

My husband—

ORGON interrupts her.

ORGON

Silence! I know the truth already.

DAMIS

Then you refuse to believe me?

ORGON

Yes! I know your temper. You hate this man and invent lies against him.

DAMIS

Lies?

ORGON

You are jealous of his goodness.

DAMIS

Father, listen—

ORGON

Enough!

He turns toward TARTUFFE.

ORGON

My friend, forgive the madness of my son.

TARTUFFE sighs deeply.

TARTUFFE

I ask only to suffer patiently.

ORGON

Your humility proves your virtue.

DAMIS stares in disbelief.

DAMIS

You defend him?

ORGON

Yes. And I punish you.

DAMIS

Punish me?

ORGON

From this moment you are no longer my son. Leave my house!

ELMIRE gasps.

ELMIRE
ORGON!

DAMIS
Very well. I will leave. But remember that I spoke the truth.

He exits angrily.

ORGON turns again to TARTUFFE.

ORGON
My friend, I beg you to remain in this house. You will guide us all.

TARTUFFE bows modestly.

TARTUFFE
I am unworthy of such kindness.

ORGON
You are the most honest man I know.

He takes TARTUFFE's hand.

ORGON
To prove my trust, I will make you master of everything I possess.

ELMIRE looks at him in astonishment.

ELMIRE

What are you saying?

ORGON

Yes. I will place my entire fortune under his protection.

ELMIRE

Think carefully before making such a decision.

ORGON

I have already decided.

TARTUFFE pretends to resist.

TARTUFFE

I cannot accept such generosity.

ORGON

You must.

TARTUFFE

I am nothing but a poor sinner.

ORGON

You are a saint.

ELMIRE realizes the danger.

ELMIRE

My husband, please listen to reason—

ORGON

No more arguments! My decision is final.

ELMIRE watches TARTUFFE quietly.

ELMIRE

Very well.

She pauses.

ELMIRE

But allow me to speak with you alone later. There are things you should hear with your own ears.

ORGON looks puzzled.

ORGON

What do you mean?

ELMIRE

Only that truth sometimes appears when we observe carefully.

ORGON

Very mysterious.

ELMIRE

Trust me. Soon you will understand everything.

ORGON nods slowly.

ORGON

Very well. We shall speak later.

ELMIRE watches TARTUFFE with calm determination.

ELMIRE

Yes... later.

TARTUFFE lowers his eyes, but a faint smile crosses his face.

Part 8

ELMIRE remained calm after DAMIS left, but inside her mind she was already forming a plan.

ORGON, however, still looked satisfied with himself.

ORGON

My dear Tartuffe, do not trouble yourself about my son's behavior. Young people are often foolish. His anger proves nothing.

TARTUFFE bowed his head.

TARTUFFE

I would gladly suffer any insult if it helps the salvation of this household.

ORGON

Your patience only increases my admiration.

ELMIRE watched the two men carefully.

ELMIRE

My husband, may I speak with you privately later this evening?

ORGON

Of course. But why not speak now?

ELMIRE

Because I wish to show you something rather than simply explain it.

ORGON looked puzzled.

ORGON

Show me something?

ELMIRE

Yes. But for that, you must promise to remain calm and patient.

ORGON

You speak as if some great secret is about to be revealed.

ELMIRE

Perhaps it is.

ORGON turned toward TARTUFFE.

ORGON

You see how mysterious she is.

TARTUFFE smiled modestly.

TARTUFFE

Madam Elmire is known for her wisdom.

ELMIRE nodded politely.

ELMIRE

Then we shall settle the matter tonight.

She turned toward the door.

ELMIRE

For now, let us leave it at that.

She exited quietly.

ORGON remained with TARTUFFE.

ORGON

My friend, you see how unreasonable my family has become. They all seem determined to misunderstand you.

TARTUFFE

I bear them no resentment.

ORGON

Your humility is admirable.

TARTUFFE

I only wish to serve Heaven.

ORGON

And you serve it well.

TARTUFFE sighed gently.

TARTUFFE

Still, I fear that my presence here creates conflict.

ORGON

Never say that! This is your home now.

TARTUFFE

Your kindness overwhelms me.

ORGON placed his hand warmly on TARTUFFE's shoulder.

ORGON

From this day forward I trust you more than anyone in this house.

TARTUFFE bowed again.

TARTUFFE

I will prove myself worthy of that trust.

ORGON

You already have.

At that moment DORINE entered the room.

DORINE

Sir, supper will soon be ready.

ORGON

Very good.

DORINE glanced at TARTUFFE with a faint smile.

DORINE

Monsieur Tartuffe must be hungry after such a long day of devotion.

TARTUFFE

One must accept whatever Heaven sends.

DORINE

Indeed.

ORGON did not notice her tone.

ORGON

Come, my friend. Let us eat.

They left together.

DORINE remained alone for a moment.

DORINE

What blindness! That man could steal the house and ORGON would thank him for it.

CLEANTE entered quietly.

CLEANTE

You speak of Tartuffe, I suppose.

DORINE

Of course. The whole house speaks of nothing else.

CLEANTE

What has happened since I left?

DORINE explained quickly.

DORINE

DAMIS accused Tartuffe directly. But ORGON defended him and drove his own son out of the house.

CLEANTE sighed.

CLEANTE

That is exactly what I feared.

DORINE

And worse still—ORGON now plans to give Tartuffe control over his fortune.

CLEANTE stopped walking.

CLEANTE

His fortune?

DORINE

Yes. Everything.

CLEANTE shook his head.

CLEANTE

Blind devotion is a dangerous thing.

DORINE

ELMIRE has another plan.

CLEANTE

What plan?

DORINE

She intends to let ORGON hear Tartuffe with his own ears.

CLEANTE looked interested.

CLEANTE

That may succeed where reason has failed.

DORINE

Tonight she will arrange a meeting with Tartuffe again.

CLEANTE

And ORGON will listen?

DORINE

Yes. Hidden somewhere in the room.

CLEANTE smiled slightly.

CLEANTE

Then perhaps truth will finally defeat hypocrisy.

DORINE

Let us hope so.

Just then MARIANE entered.

MARIANE

Dorine, I have been looking everywhere for you.

DORINE

What is the matter?

MARIANE

My father still insists that I must marry Tartuffe.

CLEANTE approached her kindly.

CLEANTE

Do not lose hope. Your stepmother has begun to act.

MARIANE

What do you mean?

DORINE

Tonight we may learn the truth about Tartuffe.

MARIANE looked surprised.

MARIANE

How?

DORINE

ELMIRE will speak with him again.

CLEANTE

And if Tartuffe repeats the same behavior, ORGON himself will hear it.

MARIANE's eyes brightened.

MARIANE

Then my father will finally understand.

DORINE

Exactly.

CLEANTE

But we must be careful. One mistake could ruin everything.

DORINE nodded.

DORINE

Yes. Tonight will decide the fate of this house.

MARIANE clasped her hands nervously.

MARIANE

I pray that truth will prevail.

DORINE smiled.

DORINE

Do not worry too much. Hypocrites often reveal themselves when they believe no

one is watching.

CLEANTE looked toward the door where ORGON had left earlier.

CLEANTE

Let us prepare carefully.

DORINE

Yes.

She turned toward MARIANE.

DORINE

And you must remain patient.

MARIANE

I will try.

DORINE

Everything depends on tonight.

The three of them slowly left the room, each thinking about what might soon happen.

Part 9

Later that evening ELMIRE prepared the room carefully.

A small table stood near the center. A few chairs were placed around it. Near the

wall stood a large table covered with a cloth.

ELMIRE looked around thoughtfully.

ELMIRE

Yes... this will do.

At that moment ORGON entered.

ORGON

You asked to speak with me.

ELMIRE

Yes. And I hope you will keep your promise.

ORGON

Which promise?

ELMIRE

To remain calm and patient, no matter what happens.

ORGON

You speak as if something strange will occur.

ELMIRE

It may seem strange at first.

ORGON folded his arms.

ORGON

Very well. What must I do?

ELMIRE pointed toward the large table.

ELMIRE

Hide under that table.

ORGON stared at her.

ORGON

Under the table?

ELMIRE

Yes.

ORGON

Why?

ELMIRE

Because I want you to hear something without being seen.

ORGON hesitated.

ORGON

You expect me to hide like a spy?

ELMIRE

If you trust me, you will do it.

ORGON looked uncertain, but finally nodded.

ORGON

Very well.

He slowly crawled under the table.

ELMIRE bent down slightly.

ELMIRE

Remember: no matter what you hear, remain silent until I give you a signal.

ORGON

Very well.

ELMIRE stepped back.

ELMIRE

Now stay perfectly quiet.

She went to the door and called.

ELMIRE

Dorine!

DORINE entered.

DORINE

Yes, madam?

ELMIRE

Please ask Monsieur Tartuffe to come here.

DORINE glanced toward the table, understanding the situation.

DORINE

Very well.

She left.

ELMIRE sat calmly in a chair.

Moments later TARTUFFE entered.

TARTUFFE

Madam, you wished to see me?

ELMIRE

Yes. Please sit down.

TARTUFFE sat beside her.

TARTUFFE

I hope my presence does not disturb you.

ELMIRE

Not at all.

She lowered her voice slightly.

ELMIRE

In fact, I wished to continue our conversation from earlier today.

TARTUFFE leaned closer with interest.

TARTUFFE

That conversation has not left my thoughts for a moment.

ELMIRE

Nor mine.

Under the table ORGON listened carefully.

TARTUFFE

Your kindness has filled me with hope.

ELMIRE

You spoke very boldly this afternoon.

TARTUFFE

Love makes one bold.

ELMIRE

But we must be careful.

TARTUFFE

Of course.

ELMIRE

If my husband discovered our secret...

TARTUFFE smiled confidently.

TARTUFFE

Your husband trusts me completely.

Under the table ORGON shifted slightly.

ELMIRE coughed gently to cover the sound.

ELMIRE

Yes... he trusts you very much.

TARTUFFE

Perhaps too much.

ELMIRE

You say that with great confidence.

TARTUFFE

Because I know how deeply he respects me.

ELMIRE leaned closer.

ELMIRE

Then you are certain he will suspect nothing?

TARTUFFE

Nothing at all.

ELMIRE

Even if you were to speak openly of your feelings?

TARTUFFE

Yes.

ELMIRE

Then tell me again... what exactly are those feelings?

TARTUFFE took her hand eagerly.

TARTUFFE

Madam, I adore you.

Under the table ORGON clenched his fists.

ELMIRE continued calmly.

ELMIRE

Adore me?

TARTUFFE

Yes. I have struggled against this passion, but it grows stronger every day.

ELMIRE

And you believe Heaven approves of such feelings?

TARTUFFE

Heaven understands the weakness of the human heart.

ELMIRE

How comforting.

TARTUFFE moved even closer.

TARTUFFE

If you would only return my love, my happiness would be complete.

ELMIRE

You are asking me to betray my husband.

TARTUFFE

Not betray—only to share a secret happiness.

ELMIRE glanced briefly toward the table.

ORGON remained silent.

ELMIRE

And you promise absolute secrecy?

TARTUFFE

I swear it.

ELMIRE

No one must ever know.

TARTUFFE

No one.

ELMIRE

Not even my husband?

TARTUFFE laughed quietly.

TARTUFFE

Especially not your husband.

Under the table ORGON began breathing heavily.

ELMIRE quickly spoke again.

ELMIRE

But if he discovered us?

TARTUFFE shrugged calmly.

TARTUFFE

Then I would deny everything. My reputation would protect me.

ELMIRE

Your reputation?

TARTUFFE

Yes. People believe me to be a holy man.

ELMIRE

And they would not believe a word against you?

TARTUFFE

Certainly not.

ELMIRE slowly withdrew her hand.

ELMIRE

You are very confident.

TARTUFFE

Because I know the world.

ELMIRE glanced again toward the table.

ORGON was now shaking with anger.

ELMIRE coughed loudly.

ELMIRE

Forgive me... I feel a slight cough.

TARTUFFE

Are you ill again?

ELMIRE coughed once more.

Under the table ORGON shifted impatiently.

ELMIRE whispered urgently toward the table.

ELMIRE

Please... wait a little longer.

But ORGON could no longer remain silent.

With a sudden movement he burst out from under the table.

ORGON

Traitor!

TARTUFFE jumped back in shock.

TARTUFFE

Monsieur!

ORGON pointed at him furiously.

ORGON

So this is your holiness! This is your virtue!

Part 10

ORGON

Villain! Hypocrite! Now I know you at last!

TARTUFFE stepped back, pretending confusion.

TARTUFFE

Monsieur... what does this mean?

ORGON

Do not pretend innocence! I heard everything.

ELMIRE rose calmly from her chair.

ELMIRE

I warned you to remain patient.

ORGON

Patient? I have been patient long enough!

He turned toward TARTUFFE.

ORGON

You dare to betray me in my own house!

TARTUFFE lowered his head humbly.

TARTUFFE

Heaven knows that I am a miserable sinner.

ORGON

Do not speak to me of Heaven!

TARTUFFE

If my weakness has offended you, I beg forgiveness.

ORGON

Forgiveness?

ORGON pointed toward the door.

ORGON

Leave this house at once!

TARTUFFE

I will obey whatever you command.

ORGON

Go!

TARTUFFE slowly moved toward the door.

TARTUFFE

I leave with sorrow in my heart.

ORGON

Enough! Go before I lose control of my anger.

TARTUFFE bowed deeply.

TARTUFFE

May Heaven forgive you for the harsh judgment you make today.

He exited calmly.

ORGON remained standing in the middle of the room, breathing heavily.

ELMIRE approached him gently.

ELMIRE

Now you see the truth.

ORGON covered his face with his hands.

ORGON

What blindness! What madness!

ELMIRE

You trusted him too much.

ORGON

Too much? I trusted him more than my own family!

ELMIRE

At least now you understand.

ORGON looked around the room as if waking from a dream.

ORGON

Yes... I understand now.

He sighed deeply.

ORGON

I accused my son unjustly. I drove him out of my house.

ELMIRE

You can still repair that mistake.

ORGON

And I insulted everyone who tried to warn me.

ELMIRE

What matters is that the truth has appeared.

ORGON nodded slowly.

ORGON

Yes. And now that hypocrite will never enter this house again.

At that moment DORINE rushed into the room.

DORINE

What happened? I heard shouting.

ORGON turned toward her.

ORGON

Everything has been revealed. Tartuffe is a fraud.

DORINE smiled triumphantly.

DORINE

At last!

ELMIRE

ORGON heard the entire conversation.

DORINE laughed.

DORINE

So the saint has lost his halo.

ORGON shook his head angrily.

ORGON

I will never forgive myself for being so foolish.

DORINE

Do not blame yourself too harshly. Hypocrites are clever.

ORGON

But I was blind.

DORINE

Many people are blinded by false piety.

ORGON suddenly remembered something.

ORGON

Wait...

ELMIRE looked at him.

ELMIRE

What is it?

ORGON

There is something far worse than my foolish trust.

DORINE

What could be worse?

ORGON's face grew pale.

ORGON

Earlier today... before all this happened... I signed a document.

ELMIRE

What document?

ORGON hesitated.

ORGON

I transferred my entire fortune to Tartuffe.

DORINE stared at him in horror.

DORINE

Your entire fortune?

ORGON

Yes.

ELMIRE looked shocked.

ELMIRE

That means everything now belongs to him.

ORGON

Exactly.

DORINE put her hands on her head.

DORINE

This disaster grows larger every moment.

ORGON walked nervously across the room.

ORGON

But that is not the worst part.

ELMIRE

There is something worse?

ORGON nodded.

ORGON

Yes.

He lowered his voice.

ORGON

I also entrusted him with an important box.

DORINE

What box?

ORGON

A box containing documents.

ELMIRE

What kind of documents?

ORGON hesitated again.

ORGON

Documents belonging to a friend of mine.

DORINE

And why are they dangerous?

ORGON sighed.

ORGON

Because if they fall into the wrong hands, they could cause serious trouble with the authorities.

ELMIRE looked alarmed.

ELMIRE

And Tartuffe now possesses them?

ORGON

Yes.

DORINE

Then he has power over you!

ORGON nodded grimly.

ORGON

Exactly.

ELMIRE walked slowly across the room, thinking carefully.

ELMIRE

This changes everything.

DORINE

Yes. That man could destroy the whole family.

ORGON clenched his fists.

ORGON

No! I will not allow it.

DORINE

But what can you do?

ORGON spoke firmly.

ORGON

First, I must find my son DAMIS and ask his forgiveness.

ELMIRE smiled slightly.

ELMIRE

That would be a good beginning.

ORGON nodded.

ORGON

And then we must recover those papers from Tartuffe.

DORINE crossed her arms.

DORINE

That will not be easy.

ORGON looked determined.

ORGON

Easy or not, it must be done.

ELMIRE looked toward the door thoughtfully.

ELMIRE

I fear Tartuffe will not remain quiet after this.

DORINE nodded.

DORINE

Hypocrites are rarely peaceful when they lose power.

ORGON took a deep breath.

ORGON

Let him try whatever he wishes. Now that I know the truth, I will fight him openly.

ELMIRE watched him carefully.

ELMIRE

I hope it is not already too late.

Outside, distant footsteps could be heard approaching the house.

Part 11

The footsteps outside grew louder.

A moment later the door opened and a man entered. He carried papers and wore the formal clothes of an officer of the law.

DORINE looked at him suspiciously.

DORINE

Who are you, sir?

M. LOYAL bowed politely.

M. LOYAL

My name is Monsieur Loyal. I come here on official business.

ORGON stepped forward.

ORGON

Official business? What business do you have in my house?

M. LOYAL

I regret that my visit may disturb you. But I am required to inform you of a legal matter.

ORGON

What matter?

M. LOYAL opened his papers.

M. LOYAL

According to a document properly signed and witnessed earlier today, this house and all property belonging to it now belong to Monsieur Tartuffe.

DORINE

What!

ELMIRE remained silent but pale.

ORGON stared at the man.

ORGON

You must be mistaken.

M. LOYAL

I assure you that I am not mistaken.

ORGON

That is impossible!

M. LOYAL calmly showed him the document.

M. LOYAL

Here is the paper, signed by your own hand.

ORGON looked at it and groaned.

ORGON

Yes... it is my signature.

DORINE

Then that villain has wasted no time.

M. LOYAL continued speaking politely.

M. LOYAL

As the new owner of the house, Monsieur Tartuffe has asked that you and your family leave the property.

ORGON

Leave?

M. LOYAL

Yes. I am here to prepare the necessary arrangements.

DORINE

Prepare them for what?

M. LOYAL

For your departure tomorrow morning.

ORGON was furious.

ORGON

This is outrageous!

M. LOYAL

I understand that such news is unpleasant.

ORGON

Unpleasant? It is robbery!

M. LOYAL

I only follow the law.

ELMIRE stepped forward calmly.

ELMIRE

Sir, surely some time can be allowed for us to prepare.

M. LOYAL

Naturally. The law is not without kindness.

DORINE muttered quietly.

DORINE

Kindness! What a word.

M. LOYAL continued.

M. LOYAL

You may remain here tonight. Tomorrow the house must be delivered to its new owner.

ORGON paced across the room in anger.

ORGON

That traitor! That thief!

M. LOYAL spoke gently.

M. LOYAL

I advise you, sir, to accept the situation peacefully.

DORINE whispered to ELMIRE.

DORINE

Listen to how politely he steals the house.

ELMIRE spoke again.

ELMIRE

Very well. We will obey the law.

M. LOYAL bowed.

M. LOYAL

Your cooperation will make this process easier for everyone.

ORGON suddenly stopped walking.

ORGON

Tell Monsieur Tartuffe this from me.

M. LOYAL

What message shall I deliver?

ORGON

Tell him that I curse the day I ever welcomed him into my house.

M. LOYAL sighed softly.

M. LOYAL

Such emotions are understandable.

DORINE laughed bitterly.

DORINE

Understandable indeed.

M. LOYAL gathered his papers.

M. LOYAL

I will return tomorrow morning to complete the arrangements.

ELMIRE nodded.

ELMIRE

Very well.

M. LOYAL bowed again and exited.

The room fell silent.

ORGON collapsed into a chair.

ORGON

My house... my fortune... everything lost because of that hypocrite.

ELMIRE placed a hand on his shoulder.

ELMIRE

Do not lose courage.

ORGON

How can I not lose courage?

DORINE crossed her arms.

DORINE

Perhaps the story is not finished yet.

ORGON looked up.

ORGON

What do you mean?

DORINE

That man may believe he has won, but the law can still surprise him.

ELMIRE nodded slowly.

ELMIRE

Yes... perhaps justice will appear at the last moment.

ORGON shook his head.

ORGON

I fear we have already lost.

Just then CLEANTE entered quickly.

CLEANTE

I have heard the news.

DORINE

Then you know everything.

CLEANTE

Yes. Tartuffe has moved quickly.

ORGON

Too quickly.

CLEANTE looked thoughtful.

CLEANTE

Still, I believe the king's justice may yet protect you.

ORGON

You still hope for justice?

CLEANTE

Yes. Hypocrisy often destroys itself.

DORINE nodded.

DORINE

That is true.

ELMIRE listened quietly.

ELMIRE

But we must prepare for the worst.

ORGON sighed deeply.

ORGON

Tomorrow we may be homeless.

CLEANTE spoke firmly.

CLEANTE

Let us wait until tomorrow comes.

At that moment another knock was heard at the door.

DORINE looked toward it nervously.

DORINE

Who could that be now?

CLEANTE went to the door and opened it.

A POLICE OFFICER entered the room.

The family looked at him with fear and confusion.

Part 12

The POLICE OFFICER stepped into the room with calm authority.

Everyone looked at him anxiously.

ORGON

Sir, what brings you here?

POLICE OFFICER

I have come to carry out an order.

ORGON sighed heavily.

ORGON

Then it is true. Tartuffe has already called the authorities.

POLICE OFFICER

Monsieur Tartuffe informed us of a matter concerning certain documents.

ORGON's face grew pale.

ORGON

The box...

ELMIRE looked at him quickly.

ELMIRE

Do not speak too soon.

POLICE OFFICER

I am searching for a man named Orgon.

ORGON stepped forward.

ORGON

I am that man.

POLICE OFFICER studied him carefully.

POLICE OFFICER

Then you must come with me.

DORINE cried out.

DORINE

Arrest him?

ORGON raised his hands calmly.

ORGON

Yes... I expected this.

CLEANTE stepped forward.

CLEANTE

Sir, may we at least understand the accusation?

POLICE OFFICER

Certain papers were placed in the hands of Monsieur Tartuffe.

ORGON spoke bitterly.

ORGON

Yes. Papers that I foolishly entrusted to him.

POLICE OFFICER

Those papers concern matters of great importance to the state.

ORGON bowed his head.

ORGON

I see.

ELMIRE stepped forward bravely.

ELMIRE

My husband acted only out of friendship. He meant no harm.

POLICE OFFICER

Perhaps.

ORGON spoke quietly.

ORGON

There is no need to defend me. I deserve the consequences of my blindness.

DORINE looked angrily toward the door.

DORINE

That hypocrite planned everything.

CLEANTE remained calm.

CLEANTE

Sir, surely the authorities will examine the entire situation before judging.

POLICE OFFICER nodded slightly.

POLICE OFFICER

The king is well known for his wisdom and fairness.

ORGON looked up with surprise.

ORGON

The king?

POLICE OFFICER

Yes.

He paused a moment.

POLICE OFFICER

The king has been informed of this matter.

Everyone in the room held their breath.

POLICE OFFICER continued.

POLICE OFFICER

And after careful consideration, he has made his judgment.

ORGON spoke quietly.

ORGON

Then I am ready to hear it.

POLICE OFFICER turned toward the door.

POLICE OFFICER

Bring him in.

Two guards entered the room.

Between them stood TARTUFFE.

TARTUFFE looked confident.

TARTUFFE

Ah, Monsieur Orgon. Justice has arrived.

ORGON looked at him with anger but said nothing.

TARTUFFE turned toward the officer.

TARTUFFE

Sir, this is the man I accuse.

POLICE OFFICER nodded calmly.

POLICE OFFICER

Yes.

TARTUFFE smiled slightly.

TARTUFFE

Then you will arrest him at once.

POLICE OFFICER raised his hand.

POLICE OFFICER

Yes.

He turned suddenly toward the guards.

POLICE OFFICER

Arrest this man.

The guards immediately seized TARTUFFE.

TARTUFFE stared in shock.

TARTUFFE

What! What are you doing?

POLICE OFFICER

Executing the king's order.

TARTUFFE

There must be some mistake!

POLICE OFFICER

No mistake.

He looked at Tartuffe sternly.

POLICE OFFICER

The king has long known of your crimes. You have used false religion to deceive many honest people.

TARTUFFE struggled.

TARTUFFE

This is impossible!

POLICE OFFICER

Your hypocrisy has been exposed.

TARTUFFE

I demand justice!

POLICE OFFICER

You will receive justice in prison.

The guards held him firmly.

ORGON stared in astonishment.

ORGON

Is this truly happening?

POLICE OFFICER turned toward him.

POLICE OFFICER

Yes.

He spoke with dignity.

POLICE OFFICER

The king understands that you were deceived by a dangerous hypocrite.

ORGON bowed deeply.

ORGON

May Heaven bless the king for his wisdom.

POLICE OFFICER

The king also orders that your property be returned to you.

DORINE clapped her hands with joy.

DORINE

Wonderful!

ELMIRE smiled with relief.

ELMIRE

Justice has prevailed.

CLEANTE nodded.

CLEANTE

The king has shown great wisdom indeed.

TARTUFFE cried out in despair.

TARTUFFE

This cannot be happening!

POLICE OFFICER spoke firmly.

POLICE OFFICER

Take him away.

The guards led TARTUFFE toward the door.

TARTUFFE struggled helplessly.

TARTUFFE

You will regret this!

But no one listened.

The guards dragged him out of the room.

Silence filled the house.

ORGON slowly turned toward his family.

ORGON

What happiness after so much misery.

ELMIRE smiled gently.

ELMIRE

Truth always finds its way to the light.

CLEANTE spoke calmly.

CLEANTE

Let this be a lesson for us all.

ORGON nodded.

ORGON

Yes. From now on I will trust reason more than appearances.

DORINE laughed.

DORINE

And perhaps listen to your family once in a while.

ORGON smiled.

ORGON

Yes... that too.

He turned toward MARIANE, who had just entered the room.

ORGON

My daughter, your marriage with Valere shall take place at once.

MARIANE's face filled with joy.

MARIANE

Thank you, father.

CLEANTE spoke warmly.

CLEANTE

Then let us celebrate the end of this strange adventure.

ORGON looked around the room at his family and friends.

ORGON

Yes. Let us celebrate honesty and truth.

They all smiled as peace finally returned to the house.