

# Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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## *Scaramouche*

By  
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CHARACTERS (9 men, 3 women):

André-Louis

Quintin de Kercadiou / Binet-Pantaloon

Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr / first Scaramouche

Philippe de Vilmorin / Pierrot / Desmoulins

Isaa--Le Chapelier /

Chabrilane / Léandre /

Polichinelle / ruffian / policeman

Harlequin / Bertrand des Amis / Cazales / King's Lieutenant

Rhodomont / Danton / Jacques

Aline

Climène / ballad singer

Mme. de Plougastel

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TIME: 1788 to 1794

PLACE: Brittany and Paris

NOTE ON COSTUMES:

The actors begin in rehearsal or street clothes, except for the actress playing Aline, who does not appear in the prologue. They gradually add pieces of their period costumes during the first two or three scenes, until they are all in full period dress by the end of Act One.

By the final scene of the play (in Paris), many of the actors are back in their rehearsal garb.

SETTING:

A scaffold upstage, with several escape stairways and ladders. A wagon for the Troupe Binet's stage, and later for the Assembly. Not much else besides a naked stage and a few set pieces.

THE COMPANY ENTERS IN TWOS AND THREES, SOME WITH CARDBOARD CUPS OF COFFEE, A COUPLE EATING DANISH OR DONUTS, ONE WITH A NEWSPAPER, A COUPLE WITH SCRIPTS AND BOOKS. ONE ACTOR PERCHES HIGH ON A LADDER. HE HOLDS A COPY OF THE NOVEL, "SCARAMOUCHE".

THE FOLLOWING WILL HAVE INTERJECTIONS, AD LIB, FROM THE ACTORS. AS EACH ACTOR READS, ATTENTION IS PAID, OR NOT PAID, AND THERE ARE SEVERAL PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS GOING ON, SOTTO VOCE, DURING THE READINGS.

"It was in truth an hour of universal ferment; mildest men  
Were agitated; and opinion filled the walls  
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.  
The soil of common life was at that time  
Too hot to tread upon...." William Wordsworth on the Revolution.

(SUNG:) *They tell me there's a Revolution,  
Oh man, I guess I don't wanna change the world....* (Beatles)

So?

*So listen to this: Paris, 1789:*  
The Declaration of the Rights of Man.  
Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect to their rights.@

The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are Liberty, Property, Security, and Resistance of Oppression---

*I suffer from insecurity—*

*I suffer from boredom—*

*Go on—*

"The nation is...the source of all sovereignty; nor can any INDIVIDUAL or ANY BODY OF MEN be entitled to authority which is not expressly derived from it.'

*Tell that to the folks in Darfur.*

*Or East Timor.*

*Let's hear it for high dudgeon!*

*High dudgeon? What about low dudgeon?*

*Go on!*

Tom Paine: "A thousand years hence those who shall live in America or France will look back on contemplative pride on the origins of their governments and say *this was the work of our glorious ancestors!*"

*Sure. But what about that small detail of slavery and the blacks?*

*What about women's rights?*

*There she goes again!*

*Chill!*

Lenin.

*John?*

V.I. Lenin: "What experience and history teach is this: that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted according to rules that might have been derived from it. "

*He stole that from Hegel.*

*But what does it mean...?*

*It means: If you don't learn from history, you're forced to repeat it.*

THAT PRONOUNCEMENT COMES FROM THE ACTOR ON THE LADDER. HE PUNCTUATES THE STATEMENT BY TOSSING HIS BOOK TO THE FLOOR.

*What's that?*

"Scaramouche". By Raphael Sabatini. He wrote swashbuckling novels back in the twenties. Most of them were made into movies. Errol Flynn...you know...

*But is it relevant...?*

*Is it even history?*

*Almost. Almost history.*

*France. Brittany. The village of Gavrilac. Seventeen hundred eighty -eight.*

Scaramouche. Scaramouche. "He was born with a gift of laughter, and a sense that the world was mad. And that was all of his patrimony." His very paternity was...*obscure*.

The country folk in Brittany, where he grew up, knew that when a minor aristocrat brings home a baby, claiming to be the child's godfather...well, they knew what they knew. And so it was with our hero, André-Louis Moreau, and the man he called Agodfather@, Quintin de Kercadiou, Lord of Gavrilac, who lived in the big chateau on the hill...

ANDRE-LOUIS LOOKS AROUND, FINDS HIS PROPS, SITS.

With his niece, Aline de Kercadiou. At fifteen, the boy was sent off to Paris for schooling, and returned to Gavrilac--six years later, as a lawyer. His head was crammed with much learning and little experience, and he was filled with the world-weary cynicism of the very young.

ANDRE-LOUIS SEIZES THE BOOK, FLIPS THROUGH IT, TOSSES IT INTO A CORNER. HE SETS HIMSELF UP SO THAT SUDDENLY, HE IS FISHING ON THE RIVER-BANK. IN THE DISTANCE, A SINGLE, RESOUNDING GUN SHOT. A FLOCK OF BIRDS FLAP THROUGH THE AIR, COMPLAINING.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Mad...the world is mad.

ALINE SNEAKS UP ON HIM.

ALINE

Talking to yourself again?

ANDRE-LOUIS

I amuse myself.

ALINE

Honestly, the way you loaf and lounge—you never *do* anything.

ANDRE-LOUIS

There's not much I want to do, coz.

ACTOR

Hey, the guy's a slacker!

ACTOR

Just like you.

ACTOR

Shhh!

ANDRE-LOUIS

I was just observing, Aline, that men are mad.

ALINE

Women, on the other hand, are rational , sane creaturesC

ANDRE-LOUIS

Rational? Look at your shoesCruined. Women's shoes aren't built for tramping around in the fields, but you *will* wear them. No, you're as mad as we are.

HE PULLS A PRETTY LITTLE TROUT OUT OF HIS PAIL.

Fish, on the other hand...

ALINE

Are sane? No, they're stupid, and easily caught. You won't find me offering myself up as someone's meal.

ANDRE-LOUIS

My dear coz, someone's going to catch you and gobble you up. Maybe sooner than you think. (SHE TURNS AWAY IN SILENCE. ) What?

ALINE

Nothing. Uncle's waiting lunch, André. (BEAT) We've got company. Guess who?

ANDRE-LOUIS

(INDIFFERENT:) Who?

ALINE

Never mind, you're even too lazy to guess.

SHE DELICATELY REMOVES THE TROUT FROM ITS HOOK.

I think I'll have this nice little fish for lunch.

SHE STARTS OFF, TALKING TO THE FISH.

Did André-Louis tell you, men are mad? He certainly is— (SHE SPOTS SOMEONE RUNNING.) And so is that *serious, sober, sacred* chum of his, Philippe.

A YOUNG MAN DASHES IN BREATHLESSLY. ALINE CALLS OUT:

Hail and farewell, Father Philippe, sorry I can't stay and chat, I've got a visitor.

SHE IS GONE.

ANDRE LOUIS

You're late—

PHILIPPE

André-Louis, thank God you're here—put down that pole—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Have a seat. You're out of breath—

PHILIPPE

There's trouble! Someone's been killed! That peasant Grossel—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Yes?

PHILIPPE

Shot dead in the woods across the river.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Yes?

PHILIPPE

By a gamekeeper. The Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr's gamekeeper's *murder!*

ANDRE-LOUIS

Was he on the Marquis' estate?

PHILIPPE NODS.

Next time Grosselet should poach on someone else's land.

PHILIPPE

Idiot! We've got to do something—talk to your godfather or—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Why? Grosselet trespassed---

PHILIPPE

Don't you know what's going on in France?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Ignorance is bliss, Philippe. What I don't know can't upset me. Look at you: you're apoplectic!

PHILIPPE

Where's your humanity?

ANDRE-LOUIS

It's not a question of humanity, it's a matter of game laws.

PHILIPPE

Stop talking like a lawyer!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Stop talking like a priest!

THEY GLARE AT EACH OTHER, THEN RELEASE INTO A FAMILIAR WARMTH.



ANDRE-LOUIS

You're my best friend, Philippe, but you're tedious, with your righteous anger.

PHILIPPE

You, in the other hand, have the morality of a tree-sloth. Nothing bothers you. (HE REMEMBERS HIS MISSION, GROWS ANGRY) André, we've got to *do* something: go to your godfather, he'll help us get justice for that poor man. Stir yourself, André, I beg you-- (ANDRE-LOUIS RISES LAZILY.)

ANDRE-LOUIS

All right, all right! But I'd rather stay and catch another trout—  
THEY START OFF.

PHILIPPE

The cruelty of that man d'Azyr—he owns the land, the sky, and damn any poor soul who needs to feed a starving brood of kids. I hate the aristocracy—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Yes, yes, the peasants hate them too, and the middle class hates the bishops and the nobles hate the king and the—

PHILIPPE STOPS IN HIS TRACKS FOR A MINUTE, WHISPERS:

PHILIPPE

I hate the corrupt Princes of Church.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(SHOCKED:) You're supposed to be a priest.

PHILIPPE

Not a corrupt one. André, I'm going to reform it.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I'm glad God's on your side; nothing short of divine intervention can change the Church, or the system.

PHILIPPE

André, a man's been killed for *nothing*, a couple of woodcocks. Grossel had a wife and four children! Hurry! (HE SEES SOMEONE IN THE DISTANCE, SLOWS DOWN.)

PHILIPPE

Oh God, he's here. The Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr!

D'AZYR, ALINE AND CHABRILLANE ARE CROSSING, IN THE DISTANCE.

ANDRE-LOUIS

With his faithful spaniel, the Comte de Chabrilane, a spaniel in laceCwhat's Aline up to, the brat?!

ALINE OFFERS HER HAND TO D'AZYR, WHO KISSES IT REVERENTLY. SHE RUNS OFF.

He's slobbering on her fingers.

D'AZYR AND CHABRILLANE MOVE FORWARD.

PHILIPPE

(CALLS OUT:) He's as calm as if nothing had-- (CALLS OUT:) A word!

D'AZYR

(APPROACHING:) Father de Vilmorin.

HE MERELY NODS AT ANDRE-LOUIS .

PHILIPPE

How can you stand here as if nothing had happened?

D'AZYR

I beg your pardon?

PHILIPPE

You murdered a peasant today.

D'AZYR

I?

PHILIPPE

Your gamekeeper. I expect you to make reparation to the widow, Mme Grossel!

D'AZYR

Reparation? (TO CHABRILLANE:) Droll, eh?

PHILIPPE

Don't laugh, monsieur. Your gamekeeper—

D'AZYR

Acted on my orders. I've been troubled by poachers before, you see.

PHILIPPE

A few woodcocks?

D'AZYR

It's not the birds *per se* that annoy me. No, it's the contempt for my inviolable rights.  
(TO CHABRILLANE:) I don't stand for insubordination, you see. The only way to meet it is to stamp it out.

CHABRILLANE

After all, there *are* game laws.

PHILIPPE

And greater laws than that, laws of Humanity.

D'AZYR

(HE LAUGHS.) A sermon!

PHILIPPE

You won't be laughing when God presents his bill to you!

CHABRILLANE

(TO D'AZYR:) My dear, the *rhetoric!*  
ANDRE-LOUIS EDGES TOWARD PHILIPPE, TOUCHES HIS SHOULDER.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Better be going, Philippe!

CHABRILLANE

(TO D'AZYR:) Ah, here's the bastard....

PHILIPPE

You have a man killed for two birds, and you—

ANDRE-LOUIS

(MORE URGENTLY:) Philippe!

PHILIPPE

Each man enters this world with the right to *live*. He can eat, sleep, laugh, weep, build, destroy, make love and mourn, and these rights are given him by God!

D'AZYR

God has given me a right too, He has consecrated my absolute authority overCwaitC  
(TO CHABRILLANE) He's made me cross. I dislike being cross. (TO PHILIPPE:)  
You've a gift, Priest, you use your tongue to sway and seduce little men. Too bad  
you're a priest, or I'd silence that tongueC

ANDRE-LOUIS

He's not a priest, he hasn't taken orders yet.

D'AZYR

In any case, he's not a gentlemanC

ANDRE-LOUIS

His blood's quite as good as yours, d'Azyr--

D'AZYR

I think not. His mother was guilty of a little "lapse" with her gardener on a summer night  
and this was the result.

A DEAD SILENCE. THE INSULT SINKS IN. ABRUPTLY PHILIPPE  
SLAPS D'AZYR. D'AZYR SMILES, UNSURPRISED.

See what you've done, priest? A blow has been struck. You know what must follow....  
PHILIPPE LOOKS BEWILDERED. ANDRE-LOUIS IS NUMB WITH  
CONFUSION.

ANDRE-LOUIS

It was a trap! Come away, PhilippeChe doesn't even own a sword!

CHABRILLANE

I'll lend him mine.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Here? Now? *Why?*

D'AZYR

He has insulted me. But don't worry, your godfather won't overhear us, we'll duel in felt  
slippers.

ANDRE-LOUIS

You must be mad!

CHABRILLANE

(TO D'AZYR:) Your coat?

D'AZYR

No thanks, I'll leave it on. This won't take more than a moment.

CHABRILLANE

Are you quite ready, monsieur?

PHILIPPE LOOKS DOWN AT THE SWORD. IT'S ALL A DREAM TO HIM. HE NODS, FACES D'AZYR SQUARELY.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Don't just stand there like a statue, Philippe, give him your side, your profile—less of a target—and hold up your sword. Look at him, for God's sake.

D'AZYR BOWS, SALUTES, PHILIPPE FOLLOWS CLUMSILY. D'AZYR STARTS TO CLOSE IN, THERE IS ONLY A CLASH OR TWO WITH THE SWORDS, AND SUDDENLY D'AZYR SINKS HIS SWORD INTO PHILIPPE'S VITALS.

ANDRE-LOUIS

No!

HE CATCHES PHILIPPE UNDER THE ARMS AS HE STARTS TO FALL, AND STAGGERS WITH HIM TO THE GROUND.

Philippe—Philippe? (TO D'AZYR:) You've killed him.

D'AZYR

Naturally.

HE WIPES HIS BLADE WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF.

The man had a dangerous gift of eloquence.

HE STARTS TO LEAVE.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Come back, coward, and face me!

HE GRABS CHABRILLANE'S SWORD. D'AZYR STOPS.

CHABRILLANE

Oh come away, he's raving.

D'AZYR

He called me a coward.

ANDRE-LOUIS

You are! He frightened you. Complete your coward's work on me!

D'AZYR STARTS TO PULL HIS SWORD, THEN STOPS.

D'AZYR

I must forego that pleasure, Bastard. It would be bad form to cross swords with anyone so base-born. (TO CHABRILLANE:) And of course there's the girl, his cousin...it might complicate my plan...

HE LEAVES WITH CHABRILLANE. ANDRE-LOUIS SITS ON THE GROUND, HOLDING PHILIPPE'S BODY.

ANDRE-LOUIS

My friend. My foolish, moral friend.

HE KISSES HIS FOREHEAD, THEN FOLDS HIS ARMS. IN DOING SO, ANDRE FINDS A LITTLE PRAYER-BOOK OF PHILIPPE'S. HE OPENS THE BOOK, READS:

"To Philippe Vilmorin, If you insist on pursuing this priestly course, accept this missal from your doubting fiend, André-Louis Moreau."

HE KISSES THE BOOK, PLACES IT IN PHILIPPE'S FOLDED HANDS.

That odious man was afraid of you. Afraid of your "dangerous gift of eloquence". He killed you for it. It follows that I must avenge you...how? Adopt your passion? I'm not even sure I understand it. But I promise you, my friend, that what he feared in you he'll learn to dread in me.

M. KERCADIOU COMES RUNNING TOWARD ANDRE-LOUIS .

KERCADIOU

I've heard! I've heard! Such a fine young man, Philippe, so full of promise!

HE KNEELS BY THE BODY, CROSSES HIMSELF.

But the marquis is a hard man, and he feels very strongly in these political matters.

ANDRE-LOUIS GENTLY PUTS PHILIPPE'S BODY ON THE GROUND AND HE RISES.

He may be right. I've never killed a man for holding another opinion...in fact, I've never killed a man at all, not my nature, but men are differently made. You're as pale as a ghost, boy!

ANDRE-LOUIS

I'll have to tell his mother.

KERCADIOU

A pity he struck the marquis.

ANDRE-LOUIS

He was deliberately provoked.

KERCADIOU

Well, he provoked the provocation with his radical ideas. No good ever came from education, André. See what comes of it?

ANDRE-LOUIS

You criticize the victim but not the killer?

KERCADIOU

Killer? My God, boy, you're talking about the Marquis de La Tour d'Azyr! He's my neighbor, my friend—soon he'll stand in a closer relationship. He's asked for Aline's hand.

ANDRE-LOUIS

No!

KERCADIOU

And she hasn't objected. One of France's oldest families, my brother would have been so pleased.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Pleased to have his child united to a murderer?!

KERCADIOU

Don't make me cross with you, child—

ANDRE-LOUIS

What have you done, godfather?! You've sold Aline to the highest bidder—

KERCADIOU

She likes him!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Because you told her to like him—Cassassin! "Thou shalt not kill." That's the King's law as well as God's. He's broken it and I want him tried for it!

KERCADIOU

Absolutely not, my boy!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Absolutely! I'm going to Nantes!

KERCADIOU

Nantes?!

ANDRE-LOUIS

To lay my case before the King's Lieutenant

KERCADIOU

Lunacy! Don't you know what's going on there? There's a meeting of the Provincial Assembly there—the rabble's out of control—the King's Lieutenant will have his hands full with them and... (LIGHTBULB.) I know what's wrong, you haven't had a bite since breakfast! You get so fractious when you're hungry. Now go up to the kitchen and ask cook for a bite---

BUT ANDRE-LOUIS IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT.

NANTES. THE STREET.

A BALLAD SINGER IS SINGING *LA CARMAGNOLE*, A FOLK SONG.

*Mademoiselle, come dance with me,  
Dance the Carmagnole with me.  
Take pity and come dance with me,  
Dance the Carmagnole with me.*

*First we tap with both our feet,  
Then we swing around and meet,  
Then take hands and form a ring,  
Hold on tight and then we swing,  
Dance the Carmagnole with me,  
Come dance with me.*

THE CROWD SURGES, AS SOMEONE ELSE JOINS IN THE SONG.  
A THIRD PERSON APPROACHES, RHODOMONT, WHO TAUNTS  
THEM WITH ANOTHER VERSION OF THE SONG:

RHODOMONT

*Behold the Bishops, fat and sleek,  
They bless the rich and scorn the weak.  
The church's coffers bulge with gold  
Whilst poor men starve and die of cold.  
God's Lieutenants, so they say,  
Will lead us all to judgment day,*



*Pater noster, let us pray,  
Will you pass the Beaujolais?  
Ah, the Carmagnole.*

ANDRE-LOUIS APPEARS, DRESSED FOR TOWN (HAT, COAT,  
ETC.). HE LOOKS AROUND, SPOTS A FRIEND IN THE CROWD.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Chapelier!

CHAPELIER

What are you doing here, Moreau?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Isaac Chapelier!

THEY SHAKE HANDS ENERGETICALLY.

Come to see the sights.

CHAPELIER

You've dragged your lazy body all the way to Nantes to see the sights? You'll see plenty today, I promise you! How are you enjoying your bucolic retirement?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Well enough, until yesterday. I came to town seeking justice. I failed. For the love of God, what does a man have to do to speak to the King's Lieutenant? I was turned away at the door like a peddler.

CHAPELIER

Old friend, the King's Lieutenant has more important fish to fry. But wait—can this be the André-Louis Moreau I went to school with in Paris? Talking about justice? No, that man was cool, and indifferent to such things.

ANDRE-LOUIS

And so am I...was. My best friend was murdered yesterday, by the Marquis de La Tour d'Azyr. He was trying to get a little justice on behalf of a dead peasant but—

CHAPELIER

The marquis objected? (ANDRE-LOUIS NODS.) So he silenced your friend? (ANDRE-LOUIS NODS AGAIN, UNABLE TO SPEAK.) That's nothing new. (BEAT.) Well, well, you have the feeble beginnings of a cause. It must be nurtured. I wonder if your cause is my cause? Come, now, no time for tears, we'll fortify our selves with brandy, and then....

ANDRE-LOUIS

What?

CHAPELIER

I'll show you the sights.

CROSS FADE TO GAVRILLAC. KERCADIOU AS HE WAS. ALINE ENTERS.

ALINE

What has that scamp done to you?

KERCADIOU

He's given me a headache. I don't want to discuss it.

ALINE

Never mind, I'll pry it out of him when he gets back. He can't keep a secret from me, I just tickle him until...

SERVANT

You've a visitor, monsieur.

HE HANDS KERCADIOU A CARD, ALINE GRABS IT, READS IT:

ALINE

Madame de Plougastel?

KERCADIOU

Here? She's here?! (HE WAVES THE SERVANT OFF.) All the way from Paris? It's been ten years since her last visit.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Twelve, Quintin...old friend....

KERCADIOU

Therese....

HE KISSES HER HAND, THEN THEY EMBRACE AS OLD FRIENDS.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Let's have a look at youCa little more Asubstance@ in the bellyCbut you look wonderful. I, on the other hand....

KERCADIOU

Nonsense! Thérèse, what on earth are you doing here in Brittany?

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Whim, mere whim. I was on my way to Paris, but Paris is so warm now, I decided to make a small detour, to check up on my old friend. I haven't come at a bad time?

HE KISSES HER HAND AGAIN.

Who's that shy young person, Quintin? It can't be C

KERCADIOU

It is! Aline, my niece Aline! (TO ALINE:) Child, this is my very dear old friend, Madame de Plougastel, you've heard me speak of her.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Not *too* old, Quintin. Such a pretty child. She has your brother's eyes.

SHE KISSES ALINE ON THE FOREHEAD.

And your good nature. How she's grown! Surrounded by beaux, I'll wager. (TO ALINE:) Take my advice, little one, don't choose the first fellow who tips his hat to you. Time...time and experience are the best guarantees of a happy match.

ALINE CURTSEYS.

KERCADIOU

Yes, but—

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

I've brought you a little gift, Aline, a locket C

ALINE

Look, it's engraved with a little "A"...for Aline.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Or for "Amour".

ALINE

It's lovely. Put it on me, please?

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

It suits you, my dear. But I remember another child here, a boy, about this high...?

ALINE

My cousin André, he's grown up too, been to school, been to Paris, studied law—

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

A lawyer, fancy. And he's here in Gavrillac?

ALINE

You've missed him by a day, madam. He's gone to Nantes.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Nantes....

ALINE

May I go admire my locket?

WITHOUT WAITING, SHE DASHES OFF. A BEAT, MME. DE PLOUGASTEL AND KERCADIOU LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

KERCADIOU

My dear. After all these years, why did you come, really? Curiosity?

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

Gavrillac--is pretty far off the beaten path to merely satisfy a whim of curiosity. I'm nervous, Quintin. I'm afraid there's a dangerous mood in Paris; it's spreading to the provinces.

KERCADIOU

Gavrillac's a sleepy place. Not much happens here.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

I'm relieved. (SHE SEEMS TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT.) That girl's a beauty, Quintin, and clever too! My compliments to the chef. (HE BOWS, LAUGHS.) What about the boy?

KERCADIOU

André-Louis? He shows great promise...as a fisherman.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

How nice. Now, how long will you keep me standing before you ring for tea?

LIGHTS CROSS FADE TO:

NANTES.

THERE IS A CROWD, LISTENING TO A STUDENT ORATOR. HE STANDS AT THE BASE OF AN EQUESTRIAN STATUE. A MAN WITH A DRUM SLUNG AROUND HIS NECK PUNCTUATES THE YOUNG MAN'S POINTS. ANDRE-LOUIS AND CHAPELIER DRIFT INTO THE SCENE, AND LISTEN.

STUDENT

Citizens of Nantes, we *have* a king, but he is not our problem. He gave us his word that we will have our voice heard. No, King Louis is not the problem, the aristocracy is. They flout the king's authority! They think themselves the very sovereignty of Brittany!

MAN IN THE MOB

What's those big words mean, mister?

STUDENT

The king has dissolved their scandalous Estates of Brittany, but it did no good for even he is as powerless as a peasant

A DRUM BEAT. A BULLET IS FIRED. THE STUDENT FALLS TO THE GROUND. A HUSH, FOR A MOMENT, THEN THE CROWD TURNS UGLY.

MAN IN THE CROWD

Murder! They killed the lad!

ANOTHER

Who killed him?

CHABRILLANE APPEARS WITH A PISTOL, SINGS MOCKINGLY:

CHABRILLANE

*See the rabble, see the fools,  
How they sweat to change the rules!  
Inhale the stink of garlic breath;  
I fear 'twill choke me quite to death.  
The more they howl and grunt for power,  
The more their schemes will all turn sour.  
We'll string them up until they mould,  
Revenge is best when eaten cold,  
Ah, the Carmagnole!*

CHAPELIER

You see, André, how cheap a good man's life is? He wanted to change France.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Unfortunately his words were too big.

CHAPELIER

Don't mock him.

ANDRE-LOUIS

He couldn't rouse his audience quickly enoughC

CHAPELIER

Why don't you climb up there and show us how, Moreau?

ANDRE-LOUIS

What an interesting idea...

HE WADES INTO THE CROWD AND STARTS TO CLIMB UP THE  
STATUE.

CHAPELIER

Moreau--André-Louis, no, I was joking! Come down fool, you'll ruin everything with your clowning!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Let go of me!

HE SHAKES OFF CHAPELIER. TO THE CROWD:

Citizens of Nantes! Just now you saw a murder before your very eyes. Yesterday, there were two murders. A poor peasant killed two birds, to feed his starving family. And he was shot in cold blood.

MUTTERS IN THE CROWD.

And then a priest, a godly man—not one of your fat bishops—he was murdered because he asked for justice for the dead man's widow. He was killed by a member of the nobility, the Marquis de La Tour d'Azyr. Do you know why?

MAN IN THE CROWD

Why?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Because the marquis was afraid.

CROWD

Why? Why? Afraid of a priest? (ETC.)

ANDRE-LOUIS

Because the priest had Right on his side. That was his powerC

ANOTHER VOICE IN THE CROWD

Your name? What is your name?

CHAPELIER

Get down before they kill you!

ANDRE-LOUIS

My name...is Omnes Omnibus!

VOICE

Funny name.

VOICE

Latin.

ANDRE-LOUIS

It means All for All. I speak for the dead priest, for the starving peasant, for this poor dead student lying in the gutter.

These obscene nobles, these gluttonous bishops, they are the rebels, for they rebel against our king! They hold him in contempt—our king!

SHOUTS OF *VIVE LE ROI* AND *LONG LIVE KING LOUIS!*

Time after time, the king and his ministers have tried to introduce reforms, only to be scorned by these men of privilege.

And what *is* Privilege? Who is it?

It is, first of all, the Church, which we call the First Estate....

HISSES, CATCALLS FOR THE CHURCH. CORRUPT!!

The Aristocracy, which we call the Second Estate....

SCREAMS AGAINST THE NOBLES.

But there is a Third Estate: Us! All of us! Merchants, farmers, bankers, peasants! All of us! They want us silent. They deny us representation. They want to cram the States General with their own privileged kind, and leave no seats for the Third Estate.

A BULLET WHIZZES BY, CROWD AGITATION.

But we *have* a voice. Citizens of Nantes, let us shout to the world that we, the Third Estate, will be heard in the name of justice--

ANOTHER SHOT.

This will be our oath, citizens. I, Omnes Omnibus, so swear!

DRUMS, ROARS. A CHANT: "WE SWEAR!" IT SEGUES INTO ANOTHER CHANT, "OMNES OMNIBUS!" CHAPELIER MANAGES TO DRAG ANDRE-LOUIS DOWN FROM THE STATUE. THEY GET LOST IN THE CROWD. THE CROWD FINALLY RETREATS.

CHAPELIER AND ANDRE-LOUIS SIT AT THE BASE OF THE STATUE, SWIGGING FROM A BOTTLE, A BIT DRUNK.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(AMUSED:) They shot at me.

CHAPELIER

Congratulations.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Justice, Aristocracy-style. I'd like to kill them all.

CHAPELIER

You'll have to hide. Don't look so shocked, they'll hunt you down and try you for sedition. André, what made you do it? Omnes Omnibus...pretty good.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Isaac.

THEY EMBRACE.

CHAPELIER

Be careful. Be very careful, we can't afford to lose you.

THEY GO OFF SEPARATELY.

A FEW DRUNKS STAGGER ACROSS THE STAGE SINGING  
*AH, ÇA IRA*. FROM ANOTHER DIRECTION COME A COUPLE OF  
SOLDIERS, ON A MISSION.

*Yes, it'll be, it'll be, it'll be.*

*Liberty is on the way,*

*Soon we're going to seize the day,*

*Yes, it'll be, it'll be, it'll be,*

*Citizens our freedom will begin today.*

THE LIGHTS CROSS FADE TO: GAVRILLAC

---

A HOODED FIGURE IS WAITING IN THE WOODS WITH A  
LANTERN. SHE PEERS INTO THE DARKNESS.

ALINE

Is that you, André?

ANDRE-LOUIS ENTERS.

At last! A troop of guards is hunting you from Nantes. They're headquartered right here in Uncle's house. I...didn't want you to walk into a trap.

ANDRE-LOUIS



Poor coz, you must be cold.

ALINE

They want to arrest you! They've got a warrant.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Oh dear.

ALINE

Whatever mischief you've made, you mustn't come home just now. I've brought you a fresh horse, down below the river. I'll put yours in the stable and no one will—

ANDRE-LOUIS

They'll accuse you of giving aid to a criminal. It's the law.

ALINE

What do I care for the law?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Spoken like a true aristocrat.

ALINE

Take me seriously just once! You must leave until this blows over, or until Uncle can get you a pardon.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Godfather?! He's got no friends at court.

ALINE

There's always *my* friend, La Tour d'Azyr—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Ah, I didn't congratulate you on your betrothal to the monster. Somehow I doubt your beloved will lift a finger to help me.

ALINE

He will if I ask him. You see, He's not my fiancé yet. He'll be obedient to my every whim.

ANDRE-LOUIS

You'd hold me over his head? I'd never agree to anything which would obligate you to marry that assassin. I don't want to see you damned, Aline.

ALINE

And I don't want to see you hanged. Nor does UncleChe's pretty cross, but that will all blow overCand now isn't the time to discuss my suitors. (SHE LISTENS.) Horses! Go! Get across the river, ride as far as you can tonight—go!

ANDRE-LOUIS

God bless you, Aline.

HE KISSES HER HAND, GOES.

THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

---

THE MASK

A COCK'S CROW. TWO ACTORS CLIMB TO A SMALL PLATFORM. THEY HAVE DONNED BITS OF COSTUME: SILVER LACE, WORN VELVET. AS THEY SPEAK, ANDRE-LOUIS LEANS OVER THE LOFT TO SPY ON THEM.

CLIMENE

My dearest Léandre, we must part at once. If my father were to find us--

LEANDRE

No, no, Climène, no one is coming, do not be afraid.

CLIMENE

I shall know no peace, Léandre, until we are safely wedded and beyond his reach. And yet--to marry without his consent! I despair!

IT BECOMES CLEAR PRETTY QUICKLY THAT CLIMENE IS A FAR BETTER ACTOR THAN HER PARTNER.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(TO HIMSELF:) Perhaps her father's marrying her off to a marquis.

LEANDRE

Do not despond, my sweet, for I have a stratagem to win the consent of your unnatural father.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(TO HIMSELF:) Stilted ass.

LEANDRE

Only place your faith in me, and in my clever friend Scaramouche. (BEAT.) Of whom I have spoken. (BEAT.) Who should be here at any moment.

BY NOW THE LOVERS ARE LOOKING AROUND.  
Who will be here at any moment--

ANDRE-LOUIS HAS TWIGGED TO THE FACT THAT THEY'RE  
ACTORS. A ROTUND MAN WITH AN INFLAMED MOON FACE  
ENTERS.

BINET  
He's late? Again? Damned Scaramouche, I'll kill him!

ANDRE-LOUIS  
A troupe of players!

BINET  
As for you, Léandre , your acting wouldn't convince an imbecile. You must let your  
voice, your gestures show her.  
HIS OWN GESTURES AND VOICE ARE PRETTY SILLY. ANDRE-  
LOUIS BEGINS TO APPLAUD. THEY LOOK UP.

BINET  
Hey, you!

ANDRE-LOUIS  
Good morning.

BINET  
What the devil are you doing up there?

ANDRE-LOUIS  
The same thing you're doing down there...making the most of some kind farmer's  
hospitality...in other words, trespassing.  
HE SHAKES THE STRAW OUT OF HIS HAIR, CLIMBS DOWN FROM  
THE LOFT. HE BOWS TO THEM, SEES ANOTHER PLAYER  
BENDING OVER A BUCKET OF WATER, WASHING HIS FACE.  
If you'll be so kind as to share your water, I'll wash and leave you to your rehearsal.

BINET  
Surely not before breakfast?

ANDRE-LOUIS  
Is that an invitation?  
HE WASHES AS THE TROUPE BRINGS IN BREAD AND CHEESE, A

BLANKET: IN SHORT, A PICNIC. [SOME MEMBERS OF THE TROUPE ARE IN MODERN REHEARSAL CLOTHES. THEY ADD BITS OF COMMEDIA COSTUME AS THE SCENE GOES ON.]

POLICHINELLE

I pine, I pine, I pine for wine.

RHODOMONT TOSSES HIM A FLASK.

RHODOMONT

Save me the soft part of the bread, please. My tooth hurts like hell.

CLIMENE

Poor fellow.

RHODOMONT

I may die from the pain. (HE DIES BEAUTIFULLY, THEN POPS UP. ) *After* breakfast.

CLIMENE

(LEAPS UP:) Oooo--a spider! Papa—

BINET

(TO ANDRE-LOUIS:) My daughter. My name's Binet, I own this troupe.

RHODOMONT

He owns the costumes and props, he doesn't own me.

BINET

(WITH A GLARE AT RHODOMONT:) We are our own authors, improvisers of the grand old Italian school.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Yes, I saw them *rehearsing* their improvisations.

BINET

What you saw *was* a rare rehearsal, to initiate our new Léandre into an Art for which Nature didn't intend him. Meet the rest of the troupe. This is Rhodomont, who plays our braggart warriors and roaring captains. This tardy man is Scaramouche; he's the sly intriguer. He's also our bookkeeper and ticket-taker. That country bumpkin over there is, of course, Pierrot. Ah and here are some ladies. So to speak.

A COUPLE OF CAMP-FOLLOWERS CURTSEY.

This old goat is Polichinelle. Léandre you've met. That nimble villain is Harlequin, a zany born, a zany bred

And finally, myself, the humble father of this company. I play Pantaloon: the father, or the deluded husband, or a doctor. And my daughter, my jewel, Climène, whose talents are unmatched anywhere but the Comedie Française in Paris....

CLIMENE

No, I'd rather be queen in this company, than a mere slave in Paris.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Mademoiselle would be queen wherever she appeared. (HE BOWS.)

BINET

(TO LEANDRE :) See? That's the style you need!

CLIMENE

You speak with a honeyed tongue, monsieur. But flattery won't get you far with me.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(WHISPERS TO HER:) Perhaps I'm not eager to get very far...with you.

BINET

(TO ANDRE-LOUIS:) We're on our way to Guichon; a fair opens there on Monday. We've got to hurry along, in order to make a grand entrance. Alas, we've lost Félician... (HE BLOWS HIS NOSE.)

ANDRE-LOUIS

I'm so sorry, my condolences.

RHODOMONT

No, he ran away yesterday. He was our carpenter and props master, and he acted a little.

POLICHINELLE

A very little.

ANDRE-LOUIS

He played Figaro, I'll wager.

BINET

You've heard of Beaumarchais?

POLICHINELLE

Beaumarchais is a dangerous man. His writing should be suppressed.

RHODOMONT

Because he's clever?

BINET

Well, we can't sit here guzzling all day if we're going to make our grand entrance into Guichon by Monday.

THE TROUPE RISES, BREAKS CAMP. TO ANDRE-LOUIS:  
We part here, sir, reluctantly.

ANDRE-LOUIS  
(IMITATING LEANDRE:) "Alas, must we part so cruelly?" I'm not going anywhere special. If you need someone to replace your Figaro, I can fill his boots. I've certain talents.

CLIMENE  
Modesty isn't one of them.

ANDRE-LOUIS  
For example: I can hit a nail with a hammer; I can teach Léandre to make love. Also, I've read Moliere, Racine, Corneille. Not to mention Sophocles and Aristophanes in the original Greek; and in Latin.

BINET  
Save the rest for another time. Let's get going.  
HE PULLS ANDRE-LOUIS ASIDE, WHISPERS:  
I'm planning a new scenario. Perhaps I'll let you play around with it?

ANDRE-LOUIS  
Very kind of you.

BINET  
You'll join us...on a trial basis. 100 sous a month.(ANDRE-LOUIS LOOKS APPALLED.) *You* should be paying *me*, for the experience. Times are bad, you know.

ANDRE-LOUIS  
I'll make them better for you, I promise.

HE TRIES ON POLICHINELLE'S MASK.

LIGHTS CROSS FADE TO ALINE AND MME. DE PLOUGASTEL,  
ABOVE, PLAYING BADMINTON

ALINE  
He's a clown, madam, my cousin André can wiggle out of anything, never fear..

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL  
But it's dangerous for a man with a price on his head. How can I explainC? In Gavrillac .you live in a dream world.

A BEAT.

You'd better defend your left court, Aline.

SHE HITS THE SHUTTLECOCK TOWARD ALINE'S LEFT.

ALINE

(RETURNS THE SERVE:) Madame, when you met your husband, was it love at first sight?

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

To be honest, I chose the count for his sterling qualities...not to mention his *sterling*. But alas, the good man died, and I'm left alone...with his sterling. Why do you ask, little one, are you keeping secrets from me? Are you in love?

ALINE

I don't know. A certain gentleman has asked for my hand. He's rich, and he's handsome, but...

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL SENDS THE SHUTTLECOCK TO THE RIGHT. ALINE MISSES IT.

Damn!

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

Who's your suitor?

ALINE

(SHRUGS.) A marquis.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

A marquis! Very grand indeed. What's his name?...I mean, there are marquises, and then there are *marquises*!

ALINE

If I decide to accept him, I'll introduce you.

SHE HITS THE SHUTTLE. MME. MISSES IT.

Meanwhile, I've got to work on my defense game.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

I surrender! I'm too old for this game.

ALINE

Nonsense, you're like a sister. How am I going to survive after you leave? You're abandoning me at a terrible time. Uncle is as cross as a bear at André, and André's run away, god-knows-where, and....Gavrillac is hideously dull. You were the only light in this gloomy place.

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

I'll be back soon, I promise. I'll rescue you from your boredom. And as for my friend Quintin, we'll kidnap him, yes? We'll make him take us to town!

ALINE

Paris?!

MME. DE PLOUGASTEL

No, he'd die of shock in Paris. We'd better try Nantes first.

BLARE OF A HORN, RATTLE OF A TAMBOURINE.  
LIGHTS ABOVE FADE OUT.

BELOW, A SIGNPOST READS "GUICHON". THE TROUPE DE BINET ENTER CEREMONIOUSLY, DRAGGING A WAGON LOADED WITH THEIR PROPS, COSTUMES, AND OTHER EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. THIS WAGON CAN BECOME A SMALL STAGE. ONLOOKERS APPEAR. ONE OF THEM IS A ROYALIST SPY. ANOTHER IS A SANS-CULOTTE WHO WHISTLES "LA CARMAGNOLE".

RHODOMONT

Citizens of Guichon, at three o'clock in the town square, the Troupe Binet will perform, for your delight, our comedy "The Heartless Father."

LEANDRE, PIERROT, SCARAMOUCHE AND ANDRE-LOUIS START TO SET UP THE STAGE FOR THE PERFORMANCE.

See the greedy father try to marry his child off to a cruel old miser. See the handsome hero and his sly accomplice Scaramouche rescue her. You'll laugh, you'll weep, you'll dance with joy as love conquers all in our play. Just five pennies a ticket.

ANDRE-LOUIS HITS THE HAMMER ON HIS THUMB AND CURSES. CLIMENE AND BINET HAVE BEEN WATCHING HIM.

CLIMENE

Working hard?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Like a slave. Still, it has its compensations.

CLIMENE

(FLIRTING:) What?

ANDRE-LOUIS

One hundred pennies a month, plus bed and board. Have you something else in



mind?

BINET

What did you say your name was?

ANDRE-LOUIS

It's Omni--I mean my name is...Parvissimus.

BINET

Ah, Italian.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Latin. It describes my position in your company: At the least of the least.

BINET

Very funny. You'd better get started on that new scenario.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Anything to give my poor thumbs a rest.

BINET

For this afternoon, you'll handle props—hurry!

THE THREE KNOCKS. THE SCARAMOUCHE COLLECTS THE  
TICKETS, FOCUS SHIFTS TO THE LITTLE STAGE.

LEANDRE

I love you, Climène, love you with all my heart.

CLIMENE

But my dear Léandre, if my father were to find us... I shall know no peace until we're safely wedded and beyond his reach. And yet, to marry without his consent...oh, I despair!

LEANDRE

Do not despond, Climène, for I have a stratagem which will win the consent of your most unnatural parent.

VOLUME AND LIGHTS FADE, THEN COME BACK UP.  
THE TROUPE BINET IS AT THE FINALE, THE LOVERS UNITED.

FIRST SCARAMOUCHE

And so our tale comes to an end, lovers united, fathers happy, and Scaramouche...with ten bright gold-pieces in his pocket.

THE ACTORS BOW TO HALF-HEARTED APPLAUSE. THE AUDIENCE CLEARS. IT IS DUSK.

BINET

Well?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Well *what*?

BINET

What did you think of it?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Could have been better. (BINET GASPS.) Could have been worse...I pay you the compliment of candor, sir.

THE TROUPE HAS GATHERED ROUND.

BINET

Our new recruit, the clever M. Parvissimus, has the impudence to tell me we're no good.

RHODOMONT

The audience had the impudence to agree with him.

HARLEQUIN

That's because this audience is too sophisticated for "The Heartless Father."

BINET

These Guichon yokels?!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Put it another way: "The Heartless Father" isn't sophisticated enough for Guichon. Surely it's easier to raise the play up to the level of the Guichon audience than it is to lower the level of the audience to the play.

CLIMENE

What brilliant changes would you make, monsieur?

BINET

Pray silence please, for the golden words of M. Parvissimus...the least of the least...

CLIMENE

Speak, oh wise one!

ANDRE-LOUIS LOOKS FROM CLIMENE TO HER FATHER.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Good God, I'm trapped between Scylla and Charybdis. But since you ask...I'd go back to the original and steal even more...or find a newer source!

BINET

Are you calling me a thief?!

ANDRE-LOUIS

I've seen it: "The Miser", it's called.

HARLEQUIN

I knew it! Molière's play!

RHODOMONT

Everybody steals.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Come along, Pantaloon, we've got work to do. We're about to appropriate something...from Beaumarchais---

POLICHINELLE

He's seditious!

BINET

(TO ANDRE-LOUIS:) You think our little play would improve if I just *borrowed* a bit....  
THEY GO OFF.

TAMBOURINES, DRUMS, HORN.

RHODOMONT

Citizens of Guichon, at three o'clock today in the town square, a brand-new comedy, "Figaro-Scaramouche".

POLICHINELLE

(ASIDE:) I *hate* the title!

RHODOMONT

(TO THE CROWD:) You'll laugh at the clever trickster who helps pull the wool over the eyes of a greedy old man. Cheer at the triumph of love! Only ten pennies per ticket....

POLICHINELLE

I *hate* the play!

FOCUS SHIFTS BRIEFLY TO THE LITTLE STAGE, WHERE THE PLAY STARTS (THE DIALOGUE IS SILENT). WE HEAR, INSTEAD, A HAMMER. A SOLDIER IS FIXING A POSTER TO A LAMP POST. A CITIZEN READS IT:

CITIZEN

"Wanted, André-Louis Moreau, lawyer, of Gavrillac, Brittany, also known as Omnes Omnibus, for property crimes, and for acts of sedition against the state. Twenty gold louis reward." Good luck to the poor fellow!

LIGHTS UP ON THE TROUPE, TAKING BOWS TO MUCH MORE ENTHUSIASTIC APPLAUSE. THE CROWD DISPERSES.

POLICHINELLE

(TO BINET:) I still say this new version is...is *fatuous*!

BINET

You call my play *fatuous*?! Scaramouche, we'll raise the ticket price to fifteen pennies a head for tomorrow's show.

HE STARTS TO LEAVE, NOTICES THE SCARAMOUCHE ISN'T AROUND.

Scaramouche?

ANDRE-LOUIS

And our good father Binet invites us all to the tavern tonight, where we'll drink a fine, crisp Volnay! (CHEERS.) His treat. (BIGGER CHEERS.)

CLIMENE

(COLD:) How generous you are with my father's money.

BINET

Scaramouche? Oh Lord, help! Calamity! Tragedy! Robbery!

PIERROT

What?

BINET

He--s run off!

POLICHINELLE

Parvissimus? I knew he couldn't be trusted!

BINET

No, you idiot, our Scaramouche! He's absconded with this afternoon's take!

POLICHINELLE

I told you the man was a crook!

ANDRE-LOUIS STROLLS BY.

BINET

Parvissimus! We've had a devastating blow! Scaramouche has bolted with the money.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Stupid of him. If he'd waited till next week, he'd have had twice as much.

BINET

Fortunately for us all, I have an alternative.

ANDRE-LOUIS

If you mean me, monsieur, no thanks. I don't perform for a paltry 100 pennies a month.

BINET

No? (TO THE TROUPE:) Go on, we'll meet you at the tavern. (THE TROUPE STRAGGLES OUT.) Step across the square, my friend.

THEY CROSS, BINET INDICATES THE AWANTED@ POSTER.

BINET

See? I think your wiser course is to be Monsieur Parvissimus, and prepare to play Scaramouche at tomorrow's show. Unless you'd rather be André-Louis Moreau, and answer to the King's lieutenant. Twenty gold louis would let me find some *real* talent.

ANDRE-LOUIS

If I yield to your kind offer, what guarantee do I have that you won't sell me for twenty gold louis next week?

BINET

You're calling me a liar? I'm not! (ANDRE-LOUIS NODS: HE'S HEARD THIS BEFORE.) Thanks to you we've done well here, I admit it.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Only in private.

BINET

You make me mad with your arrogance, but I need you. That's you guarantee.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(A BEAT.) What choice do I have?

BINET

You won't regret it, my boy. (HE OFFERS HIS HAND.) No rancor?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Oh, no rancor.

HE LAUGHS. BINET MOVES OFF.

ANDRE-LOUIS SITS ON THE EDGE OF THE LITTLE STAGE,  
LIGHTS A CANDLE, PULLS OUT PAPER AND PENCIL. HE  
WRITES:

Dear Godfather, I know you're still angry with me, and you have every right to be, but we shall always disagree about Philippe's murder, and my need for justice....

HE CRUMPLES THE PAPER, STARTS ANOTHER.

Dear Godfather, this letter is to let you know that I'm safe. Despite our quarrel...

HE CRUMPLES THE PAPER, STARTS ANOTHER.

Dear Aline, Finally I have a moment to thank you for your kindness. I call you a brat, but you are....you are...

THIS ONE, TOO, HE CRUMPLES IN DISGUST, LEAVES. ]

RHODOMONT AND THE TROUPE ENTER WITH DRUMS AND  
TAMBOURINES.

RHODOMONT

Come one, come all! Three o'clock in the market square, the Troupe Binet's exciting new comedy, "Scaramouche-Figaro". You'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll pay just 25 pennies to enjoy the show!

HE LEADS THE TROUPE OFF.

Come one, come all, three o'clock in the market square, the Troupe Binet.... (ETC.)

THE LIGHTS CROSS-FADE TO THE ABOVE. A MIRROR, A  
COSTUME, A TABLE. ANDRE-LOUIS STARES AT THE MASK HE  
HOLDS IN HIS HANDS. THEN HE REMOVES HIS JACKET, PANTS,  
SHIRT; HE PUTS ON THE BLACK HOSE AND TIGHT-FITTING  
JACKET OF SCARAMOUCHE. HIS ACTIONS ARE AS RITUALIZED  
AS A MATADOR'S. FINALLY:

ANDRE-LOUIS

I've gone from a lawyer, to an orator, to an outlaw. Now, tonight, I put on this mask. Maybe I've always been a clown.

HIS BACK TO US, HE PULLS ON THE MASK, SLOWLY TURNS.

Yes...Scaramouche....

HE BOWS, SLOWLY DESCENDS THE STAIRS. THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

LIGHTS BUMP UP: HIGH NOON. TRUMPET, TAMBOURINE, DRUMS. THE SIGNPOST SAYS "FOUGERAY".

RHODOMONT

Citizens of Fougery! Three o'clock in the market square, the Troupe Binet will present for your delight a performance of our new play, "The Sly Tricks of Scaramouche".

Called "great" in Guichon, called "magnificent" in Maure, proclaimed "perfection" in Piperac! You'll laugh, you'll weep, you'll pay a mere thirty pennies to enjoy 'he show! Come one, come all....

HIS PARADE GOES OFF.

DUSK. THE STAGE FOOTLIGHTS HAVE BEEN LIT. THERE IS A SCENE IN PROGRESS. SOME THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN THE COMPANY. THE ACTORS SEEM TO HAVE A SPARKLE, A GIVE-AND-TAKE THEY LACKED BEFORE, AND WHILE THE PLAY ISN'T GREAT LITERATURE, IT'S AN IMPROVEMENT. EVERYTHING IS BETTER...EXCEPT POSSIBLY LEANDRE. PANTALON (BINET), CLIMENE, POLICHINELLE AND HARLEQUIN ARE ON STAGE.

PANTALON

And I say to you, you hopeless puppy, that you're too late! I plan to marry this girl myself. Get used to it, my boy: Climène will be your new step-mother!

LEANDRE

Over my dead body, father! I love her, and I intend to marry her!

PANTALON

No respectable girl would have you, son. You know why? Because I'm going to disinherit you—you're a pauper as of now!

POLICHINELLE

Poor young man, I wanted to help you, but....

CLIMENE

Where's your man Scaramouche? You told me he'd get us out of this mess—

LEANDRE

All is lost, Climène, all is lost!

ANDRE-LOUIS

All is found!

WITH A WHOOP, HE COMES SLIDING DOWN A POLE ONTO THE STAGE, HOLDING A DOCUMENT.

ALL

Scaramouche!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Here's the document that proves Climène 's parentage. And here's the ruby ring that was found with her, when she was abandoned at birth.

POLICHINELLE

Ruby ring?! (HE STUDIES IT.) My child, my child! Is it really you? (TO THE OTHERS:) My little one was stolen at birth by pirates! I thought she was dead. My dearest!

CLIMENE

Father!

LEANDRE

Beloved! Does this mean...?

POLICHINELLE

Yes! If she truly loves you, I'll not stand in the way!

ANDRE-LOUIS

(TO PANTALON:) Give up, you old windbag.

PANTALON

(TO HIMSELF:) Foiled! By that damned rascal, Scaramouche! (TO THEM:) However, I am resigned. I've lost a bride...but I've gained a daughter! (HE MAKES A THREATENING GESTURE TO SCARAMOUCHE.) And so, my friends....

HE IS DROWNED OUT BY WILD APPLAUSE. THE ACTORS BOW, LEAVE THE STAGE. THE CROWD DISPERSES.

RHODOMONT

We're going to drink excellent wine tonight!

HARLEQUIN

Barrels of it!



THE SIGNPOST IS CHANGED TO "REDON".

ANDRE-LOUIS

Monsieur Binet, may I have a word?

HE HAS REMOVED HIS MASK. BINET IS COUNTING MONEY.

BINET

Certainly, my friend!

ANDRE-LOUIS

About my wages...

BINET

What about them? 100 pennies isn't enough, Monsieur André-Louis Moreau?

ANDRE-LOUIS

If you call the local police, I'm sure that by tomorrow night I'll be swinging from a gibbet, and you'll be back to sleeping in barns and drinking sour wine.

BINET

(UNCTUOUS:) I'm a fair man, Scaramouche. 200 a month.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I think not.

BINET

300!

ANDRE-LOUIS

No thanks. We'll be full partners, with equal shares.

BINET

Monstrous! Impossible! I won't.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Of course, you'll still be sole owner of the props and costumes.

BINET

(BITTER:) You're too generous.

ANDRE-LOUIS

One other thing: from now on the actors get shares in the company.

BINET

Ridiculous! No one pays actors!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Which do you want? This pack of cringing starvelings, or a strong company of self-respecting comedians. Redon's not our final destiny, you know. We'll stay here a little while, to rehearse, and when we're ready to show ourselves, we'll move on to the city...to Nantes! To the Royal Theatre Royal.

BINET

Royal Theatre? But we've never played *inside* a theater.

ANDRE-LOUIS

There's always a first time.

BINET STARTS TO EXTINGUISH THE FOOTLIGHTS. LEANDRE JOINS ANDRE-LOUIS ON THE DECK OF THE ASTAGE.

LEANDRE

Everyone heard you. He's going to pay us? (ANDRE-LOUIS NODS.) Miraculous! And all thanks to you. How was I tonight? (ANDRE-LOUIS SHAKES HIS HEAD.)

ANDRE-LOUIS

Try again.

CLIMENE JOINS THEM. LEANDRE IS AS WOODEN AS EVER.

LEANDRE

My dearest Climène, I adore you. I see your face in my dreams at night

ANDRE-LOUIS

"My dearest Climène, I adore you. I see your face in my dreams at night.... " She's not a piece of wood, she's a woman. You have to look at her, touch her.

LEANDRE CLAMPS A HAND HEAVILY ON HER SHOULDER.

You'll give the poor girl a hump-back. Léandre, don't you know what theatre is about?

LEANDRE

Romance?

ANDRE-LOUIS

No, it's about life and death.

CLIMENE

Don't be silly!

ANDRE-LOUIS

It is. The audience may think it's comedy, but if you, standing on this stage, don't

believe you'll really *die* if you can't have this girl, no one else will believe you either; no one will feel anything. You've got to be ready to risk everything—to die—to get what you want! In this case, the lady. Now...again.

LEANDRE

My dearest Climène , I adore you. I see your face in my dreams at...

CLIMENE

Hopeless!

LEANDRE

I try, I really do.

ANDRE-LOUIS

It's not all your fault. With these scenarios, an actor sounds like a piece of wood! And the plots! Always some poor virgin about to be sold in marriage to some nasty old man who, in the end, turns out to be her father--it's preposterous! Again.

LEANDRE

My dear Climène , I adore you, I see your face---

ANDRE-LOUIS

Have you ever held a flower in your hand? You can't just grab it, you'll squeeze out all the juice. Look, touch her face like she's a flower.

ANDRE-LOUIS TOUCHES HER FACE GENTLY.

Now, look deep into her eyes. Al see your face in my dreams, your lovely flower-face... Gently...softly. Eh?

LEANDRE NODS, A WILLING STUDENT.

LEANDRE

Gently...softly...lovely flower-face...

HE GOES, MUTTERING TO HIMSELF. A BEAT.

ANDRE-LOUIS

He'll catch on. Well, I must be off...

CLIMENE PLANTS HERSELF IN FRONT OF HIM.

CLIMENE

Why do you hate me?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Hate you? Mademoiselle, I think you adorable. I envy Léandre his role. I'd have the inspiration of playing with a delectable Climène .

CLIMENE

You'd be a disaster--stop laughing at me!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Why would I be such a disaster? (BEAT. SHE TURNS AWAY.) I see, you're teasing in order to hurt me. If I were a woman as lovely as you, I'd never use cruelty as a weapon. Remember, you're obliged to treat me kindly because it was your beauty that convinced me to join the troupe, that very first day...in the barn...

HE MOVES IN ON HER.

You're my destiny!

CLIMENE

You go too fast.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I'm a man of impulse. See how I've transformed your father's troupe? Should I be any slower in love?

CLIMENE

(SKEPTICAL:) You're audacious.

ANDRE-LOUIS

And the fact that I am gives me hope. I've asked you for nothing...so far.

CLIMENE

Very wise.

ANDRE-LOUIS

But I shall. After our triumphant debut at the Comédie Française in Paris, we'll be married.

CLIMENE

Much too fast....

ANDRE-LOUIS

On the contrary, it's an idea whose time has come.

THEY KISS, THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THEM.

A NEW CARDBOARD SIGN: 1789

ABOVE, ALINE AND MME. DE PLOUGASTEL ARE STROLLING WITH A SMALL DOG.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

I fear I'm wearing out my welcome with your uncle.

ALINE

No, he's grateful; and your visits keep me from going mad. When may we go to Paris?

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

The climate in Paris is unhealthy, lately. Dangerous, not to say explosive. You're much safer here in Brittany, Aline.

ALINE

Safe. Tell me, are all men beasts? (MME. LAUGHS.) Life is so puzzling...

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

What do you know of life?

ALINE

Not enough.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

You had a suitor, I recall. Rich, handsome, a veritable Apollo!

ALINE

(BEAT.) But I don't see his face when I go to sleep at night.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

Then I'd *certainly* accept his offer. Who wants a husband who gives you insomnia?  
(BEAT.) You don't see any other face...when you go to sleep?

A BEAT. ALINE SWEEPS THE DOG UP INTO HER ARMS.

ALINE

Naughty Charlot, your paws are muddy, you'll need a bath!

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

Have you heard from your cousin?

ALINE

He's an awful correspondent...and we don't know where he is. It's cruel of him to worry us so. (SHE BEGINS TO SHAKE THE DOG.) Cruel! André, if I could get my hands on you... (SHE BURIES HER HEAD IN THE DOG'S FUR, THEN LOOKS UP.) Charlot *must* have a bath!

THEY WALK ON, THE LIGHTS CROSS FADE TO THE DECK.

A MORE FORMAL SIGNPOST, WHICH SAYS: "CITY OF NANTES".  
RHODOMONT ENTERS, WITH A BANNER. THE CAMP  
FOLLOWERS ARE NO LONGER THERE, JUST A DRUM AND A

TRUMPET, AND HE IS FAR BETTER DRESSED.

RHODOMONT

Now appearing at the Royal Theatre, the acclaimed Troupe Binet, with a repertory of six plays, including the premiere of a new comedy, "The Skinflint". This is the last provincial visit of these distinguished thespians, who revive the glories of the Commedia dell'Arte, before their opening in Paris!

CROWD 1

I saw that show last night.

CROWD 2

And?

CROWD 1

Damned good--much better than I'd have guessed.

CROWD 3

They've got a certain flair...

CROWD 1

A subtlety that surprised me.

CROWD 4

Too bad they chose this moment to come to Nantes. Nothing they can do on stage can be as interesting as what's going on in the streets.

CROWD 2

True, stage blood is never as effective as the real thing.

CROWD 1

I can never tell the difference. Look, there's their Climène, I recognize her.

CROWD 3

She's a real beauty!

A COUPLE OF THE GENTLEMEN OFFER CLIMENE A SWEEPING BOW AS SHE ENTERS WITH ANDRE-LOUIS, HARLEQUIN, AND PIERROT.

PIERROT

You've acquired a following.

CLIMENE

They only recognize me because I'm the only one who doesn't wear a mask on stage.

ANDRE-LOUIS

You're too modest, my dear.

HARLEQUIN

Our notices have been splendid...thanks to you, Scaramouche.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Don't give me all the credit.

HARLEQUIN

All I know is, I've never slept in so soft a bed, in so fine an inn.

HE LOOKS OFFSTAGE:

Look at that fine carriage!

AL SUDDENLY DROPS HIS ARMS FROM CLIMENE'S WAIST.

Someone's getting out....look at her! A princess, maybe?

ALINE

(FROM OFF:) André...André-Louis—

ANDRE-LOUIS

Excuse me, friends. Pierrot, will you make sure Climène gets home safely?

HE RUNS OFF, TO THE CARRIAGE.

HARLEQUIN

Look, he's climbed into the coach with the princess!

PIERROT

Maybe he's a prince in disguise.

CLIMENE

Who is that woman?!

HARLEQUIN

His sister, of course.

CLIMENE

How do you know?

HARLEQUIN

I know what he'll tell you when he gets back. (SHE GLARES.) Well, you wouldn't believe him if he said she was his grandmother.

THE MEN LAUGH, THEY GO OFF.

A BENCH.

ALINE

You're keeping odd company. Wasn't that Climène Binet you were fondling? I saw the play last night, and recognized her.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I never saw you.

ALINE

Were you there too? (HE NODS) Good thing Uncle didn't see you.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Was he there?! How is he? And what are you doing here in Nantes?

ALINE

I needed some amusement, and Mme. de Plougastel thought Nantes would be safer than Paris.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Whoever the lady is, she's quite right.

ALINE

She's an old friend of uncle's. She's been visiting us in Gavrillac...she cheers me up and teaches me about the world. André, what about you? (A LITTLE BEAT.) I've been told that gentlemen are attracted to actresses and other creatures of the night.

HE LOOKS AWAY.

Maybe you've joined the Troupe Binet as a camp-follower.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I have.

ALINE

Seriously.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I've become part of the troupe.

ALINE

To bring you closer to Mademoiselle Binet? (BEAT) Uncle will kill you!

ANDRE-LOUIS

If a man's being hunted, coz, what better place to disappear than a band of actors? We wear masks.

ALINE



But you never wrote us.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I wanted to surprise you with my artistic prowess.

ALINE

You're an *actor*?!

ANDRE-LOUIS

What did you think of the play today?

ALINE

Slight...but amusing.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(BOWS.) You're too kind.

ALINE

You?! I thought they improvised!

ANDRE-LOUIS

I wrote the scenario. But soon I'll be writing a different kind of play—

ALINE

Your scenario wouldn't have been much without those players. Your Scaramouche is quite amusing.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Again, you're too kind. (HE DOES A SCARAMOUCHE GESTURE, SHE GASPS.) You thought I shifted the scenery? (A BEAT.) Never mind, what's new at home? Is my godfather still angry?

ALINE

He worries about you, but he doesn't admit it to me. I'll tell him you're--

ANDRE-LOUIS

Tell him I'm well and prospering. *Don't*, for the love of God, say you saw me on stage today.

ALINE

As you wish. He'd be relieved to know you've given up all that political nonsense. (BEAT.) Well, haven't you? (BEAT) André?

ANDRE-LOUIS

(A BEAT.) How's your murderous marquis?

ALINE

He's here with us.

ANDRE-LOUIS

So you still plan to marry him?

ALINE

Peace, André. He told me about the duel with Philippe. I'm sorry about your friend, I know you loved Philippe; but he *did* challenge d'Azyr, didn't he?

ANDRE-LOUIS

He persists in lying to you? And you're fool enough to believe him? Listen to me, Aline—

ALINE

No, you listen: you rise from the warm bed of that "actress" who sells her wares—

ANDRE-LOUIS

I don't see much difference between a girl like that and a lady who sells herself for money and a title!

SHE SLAPS HIM. A PAUSE.

ALINE

You'd better get back to your actress.

ANDRE-LOUIS

And you to your assassin.

HE STALKS OUT. SHE WEEPS.  
LIGHTS FADE OUT.

THE TAVERN. A CRUDE TABLE, BENCHES, BOTTLES OF WINE.  
IN A CORNER, BINET SITS NURSING HIS OWN BOTTLE. HE IS  
DRUNK, AND NEARLY ASLEEP. ANDRE-LOUIS ENTERS, AND IS  
GREETED BY THE TROUPE.

PIERROT

Prince Scaramouche!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Pardon?

CLIMENE

Who was that woman who abducted you this afternoon?

ANDRE-LOUIS

A sort of sister.

THE TROUPE LAUGHS.

HARLEQUIN

What did I tell you?

CLIMENE

She has a name, I suppose.

ANDRE-LOUIS

If you must know: Aline de Kercadiou, niece of my godfather.

CLIMENE

Fine, fancy name.

ANDRE-LOUIS

We've been playmates since we were babies. All right, I'll satisfy your curiosity about that too, friends. I'm a bastard. My godfather raised me, very generously, too, but that's all. Folks in Gavrilac, are sure he's my father, but it's not true. I'm as poor as a church mouse, like you.

A PAUSE.

CLIMENE

You should have told me sooner.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I never lied to you, or pretended to be something I wasn't.

CLIMENE

I'm tired. I think I'll go to bed.

AS SHE RISES TO LEAVE, THREE ARISTOCRATIC GENTLEMEN ENTER. THEY ARE D'AZYR, CHABRILLANE AND ROSIER.

PIERROT

Here's company.

RHODOMONT

Here's mischief. The cream of Brittany's aristocracy, come to pay homage to Climène. If she can stomach them.

CLIMENE TURNS TOWARD THEM. HER POUT IS GONE, HER SMILE IS RADIANT. MEANWHILE, ANDRE-LOUIS HAS SLIPPED ON HIS SCARAMOUCHE MASK. HE MOVES INTO THE SHADOWS.

CLIMENE

Gentlemen....

D'AZYR KISSES HER HAND. THE OTHER TWO BOW LOW.

D'AZYR

We've come to pay homage, mademoiselle.

RHODOMONT SNORTS, CLIMENE GLARES AT HIM.

To your beauty, as well as your gifts as an actress. We'd be honored if you'd join us for a little supper.

CLIMENE SPOTS ANDRE-LOUIS IN THE SHADOW. HER SMILE BECOMES DAZZLING AS SHE GRABS HER WRAP.

D'AZYR

Splendid. I have a friend at the Comédie Française who could remove you from this sordid gypsy life....

HE DRAPES THE WRAP OVER HER, LEADS HER OUT.

RHODOMONT

Too bad, Parvissimus...lowest of the low.

ANDRE-LOUIS REMOVES HIS MASK.

Sordid gypsy life...don't you love the aristocracy? Won't it be grand when we pack the lot of them off to Vienna with our charming Austrian queen?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Never mind. What are you drinking, Rhodomont?

RHODOMONT

Volnay. A crisp-but-mellow Volnay.

HE POURS, THEY DRINK.

You may act cool, but you're not a good enough actor to fool me.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Perhaps not. And what about you, Rhodomont, who are you fooling?

RHODOMONT

Do you like music? Here's a pretty tune.

HE WHISTLES "AH, ÇA IRA".

ANDRE-LOUIS

Very pretty indeed.

LIGHTS FADE DOWN.

A LIGHT UP ON MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL. SHE IS CRADLING  
ALINE IN HER ARMS. THE GIRL IS CRYING.

MADAME DE PLOUGASTEL

My dear child, you must tell me what's wrong.

ALINE SHAKES HER HEAD.

How can I comfort you if you don't tell me what happened. Did anyone try to hurt you?

ALINE SHAKES HER HEAD.

Well then, cry away your woes, it will make you feel better...

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

LIGHTS BACK UP ON THE TAVERN. MORE BOTTLES. IT'S NEAR  
DAWN. EVERYONE IS DRUNK. THE ACTORS' MASKS ARE OFF.

BINET AWAKENS SUDDENLY.

BINET

Wha--what time is it?

LEANDRE

Past five.

BINET

Why aren't you all in bed?

ANDRE-LOUIS

We were waiting to see the sunrise.

BINET

How romantic. (RISES.) Climène's upstairs?

A SILENCE. FINALLY HARLEQUIN BLURTS OUT:

HARLEQUIN

She's at supper with a marquis.

BINET

What marquis?

ANDRE-LOUIS

De La Tour d'Azyr.

RHODOMONT

A late supper. Perhaps it's a breakfast.

BINET

A miracle!

SOUND OF A CARRIAGE.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Breakfast sounds like a good idea. Is there any bread left?

HARLEQUIN TOSSES HIM A LOAF; HE TEARS OFF A PIECE, STARTS TO EAT. HE IS VERY CALM. WE HEAR CLIMENE'S TRILLING LAUGH OUTSIDE.

RHODOMONT

I was wrong, you're a better actor than I thought.

CLIMENE SWEEPS IN, HAIR TUMBLING DOWN. IN ONE HAND SHE CARRIES A BOUQUET. ON HER MIDDLE FINGER SHE SPORTS A LARGE DIAMOND.

LEANDRE

We've been worried sick about you!

BINET

(NOT AT ALL WORRIED:) My child....did you have a good time?

CLIMENE

Most pleasant.

ANDRE-LOUIS

And not unprofitable, judging by that bauble on your finger. Would it be rude for your fiancé to ask what you gave him in return?

CLIMENE

Nothing.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Ah, then it's a payment in advance? (A BEAT.) Think what you're doing, my dear.

CLIMENE

I can think without your help.

BINET

Well said! Marriage to this fellow would ruin you? He'd always be there, an inconvenience, to mar your every chance.

THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TROUPE LOOK AT BINET IN DISGUST, AND MOVE AWAY FROM HIM.

See how he's seduced them all? (TO THEM:) You are *my* players! I own you, not this

base-born amateur!

RHODOMONT

He owns us?

HE BEGINS TO WHISTLE [SING? ] “AH, CA IRA”.  
UNNOTICED, A STRANGER HAS ENTERED THE TAVERN. HE SITS  
IN A DARK CORNER, WATCHES SILENTLY.

BINET

(OOZING UNCTION:) No hard feelings, my boy? You wouldn't stand in her way?  
Think of what it means, the heights to which she might—

ANDRE-LOUIS

You two are fantastic!

BINET

Don't think about abandoning your colleagues, Scaramouche....  
FROM HIS BLOUSE BINET DRAWS THE “WANTED” POSTER,  
BRANDISHES IT. THEN HE STARTS TO LEAD CLIMENE OFF.  
Come, girl, you must get to bed.  
THEY EXIT.

HARLEQUIN

I think she's already been to bed. (HE RISES.) Which is where I'm going...

PIERROT

Good idea.

THE TROUPE DEPART, LEAVING RHODOMONT AND ANDRE-  
LOUIS. SILENCE FOR A MOMENT, THEN THE MAN IN THE  
CORNER SPEAKS.

CHAPELIER

So this is where you've been hiding—  
HE RISES, CROSSES TO ANDRE-LOUIS.  
Behind a mask!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Isaac Chapelier! How did you find me?  
THEY EMBRACE. RHODOMONT STARTS TO LEAVE, ANDRE-  
LOUIS BECKONS HIM TO STAY.  
Rhodomont, meet my friend, Chapelier. (TO CHAPELIER:) He can be trusted, Isaac.

RHODOMONT

Put it this way: we whistle the same tune.

CHAPELIER

I've been looking for André-Louis, for Omnes Omnibus, all these months, and lo, by *accident*, I go to the theater and--! Have you forgotten Philippe de Vilmorin?!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Never. Never! His ghost walks with me each time I step onto the stage.

CHAPELIER

But you've abandoned the Cause to become a comedian?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Do you know that old expression, "there's more than one way to skin a cat"? (CHAPELIER NODS.) I have been honing certain small skills, here.

RHODOMONT

Small skills? He's a born player!

CHAPELIER

We need you, André-Louis, right now! We're to have elections. Of course, last time that happened, the aristocracy tried to slash us to bits, literally, but we stayed united. This time we'll win. Moreau, we've saved a vacancy for you, we want you to go as a delegate and—

ANDRE-LOUIS

No thanks.

CHAPELIER

But we're sending you to Versailles, this is our chance to use your skills.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I can't go to Versailles until I've settled a personal score. You go, Isaac.

CHAPELIER

(TO RHODOMONT:) What can I do?

RHODOMONT

Go to Versailles. This is the first time he's taken me into his confidence, but I know, I know what I see....

ANDRE-LOUIS

What do you see, Rhodomont?



RHODOMONT

(TO CHAPELIER:) Something's going on, some kind of mischief. His brain is cooking it, and I suspect it will be ready soon.

ANDRE-LOUIS

A watched pot never boils. Soon, though...

CHAPELIER RISES TO LEAVE.

CHAPELIER

Soon may not be soon enough.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Watch your back, Isaac.

CHAPELIER LEAVES.

It's late...or early. (A BEAT.) In my sleep I meet my friend Philippe. We're fishing.

RHODOMONT

Bait your hook well, friend.

LIGHTS FADE OUT ON THEM.

ALINE, ABOVE, EMBROIDERING, ON A BENCH. SHE IS FURIOUS.  
D'AZYR ENTERS, UNSUSPECTING.

D'AZYR

You sent for me, dearest?

ALINE

Monsieur, my uncle once gave you permission to court me. No more, no more.

D'AZYR

Pardon me?

ALINE

News travels fast in Nantes. I've heard all about last night's supper with La Binet.

D'AZYR

That?! The girl was an incident, hardly a folly.

HE TRIES TO KISS HER HAND.

ALINE

Don't...with lips contaminated by a whore!

SHE CRACKS HIM ACROSS THE FACE WITH HER FAN.

D'AZYR

Aline, I've been a fool. I'll go to the theatre tonight and tell the little tramp I'll never see her again. Aline, forgive me!

HE RUSHES OUT IN HUMILIATION.

ALINE

(TO HERSELF:) I'll pray for forgiveness too.

CROSS FADE TO:

[BACKSTAGE OF THE THEATRE ROYAL NANTES?]

RHODOMONT AND ANDRE-LOUIS ENTER. IT'S NEARLY TIME FOR THE SHOW.

LEANDRE

Cutting it a bit close, aren't you?

ANDRE-LOUIS

I never miss a curtain. Hand me my mask.

RHODOMONT MOVES OFF A LITTLE, LEANDRE FETCHES THE MASK. ANDRE-LOUIS GETS INTO HIS COSTUME DURING THE FOLLOWING:

LEANDRE

I don't understand how you can be so calm?! Climène....I thought you loved her; you were to marry her.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I don't like stale merchandise.

LEANDRE

Don't let her go without a struggle!

ANDRE-LOUIS

She's already left. (BEAT.) Léandre, do you love her? (LEANDRE TURNS AWAY.) You do! All this time...lucky for you I spared you that mistake.

LEANDRE

You're heartless! My God, if she'd been mine, I'd have killed that marquis fellow in an instant!

ANDRE-LOUIS

Would you marry her as she is?

LEANDRE

I am her slave.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I loved her too, for a while.

A LONG PAUSE.

Have you ever read "Hamlet"?

LEANDRE SHAKES HIS HEAD.

Do you remember what I told you once, that you have to be willing to die?

LEANDRE

Especially for comedy, you said.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Yes. If I were to make a few changes in today's scenario, could you learn them?

LEANDRE

Certainly.

ANDRE-LOUIS

I think you might be pleased with the results. (HE PULLS A DOCUMENT FROM HIS SHIRT.) Take this, it's a sort of will. I'm leaving the actors all my shares in the Troupe Binet.

LEANDRE

You aren't planning to kill yourself?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Of course not, Scaramouche never dies. But I suggest you all change the name of the troupe. Come on....

THEY STROLL OFF, BINET ENTERS FROM ANOTHER DIRECTION.

BINET

Those two have grown quite cozy. Are we ready to go?

RHODOMONT NODS, CLIMENE RUSHES IN.

You're late, my dear child.

CLIMENE

Am I? My marquis is in the audience again.

THE THREE KNOCKS. THE LIGHTS CROSS FADE WITH THE ABOVE. LEANDRE AND ANDRE-LOUIS ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF

THE SCENE.

LEANDRE

Woe is me, woe is me, are we to have no justice?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Don't despond, Léandre. Justice always triumphs in the end. Shall I tell you a story? It starts with a murder. A poor man is in the woods, hunting for a scrap or food for his family.

SUDDENLY THEY ARE ACTING OUT A DUMB-SHOW. RHODOMONT JOINS THEM. LEANDRE PLAYS THE POOR MAN, JOYOUS AT THE TWO RABBITS IN HIS SNARE. SUDDENLY ANDRE-LOUIS (AS THE MARQUIS) AND RHODOMONT ENTER. ANDRE-LOUIS SEES THE THIEF. HE HANDS RHODOMONT A PISTOL, AND RHODOMONT AIMS AND KILLS THE THIEF. NOW LEANDRE QUICKLY DONS A CLERICAL COLLAR, AND ASSAILS ANDRE-LOUIS, WHO TAKES OUT A SWORD AND KILLS LEANDRE.

ANDRE-LOUIS

(TO THE AUDIENCE:) Don't blame me, the priest showed contempt for my absolute and inviolable rights. Besides, the priest had a dangerous gift of eloquence. Now I'll take my cup of chocolate...

D'AZYR HEARS RHODOMONT WHISTLING "AH, ÇA IRA". HE FROWNS.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Perhaps I'll kill this one too. After all, my nobility has been consecrated by God.

THERE IS A NOISE OFF, FROM THE AUDIENCE, WHISTLES, CATCALLS, VARIOUS CHANTING OF AH, CA IRA.

RHODOMONT

Poor marquis, afraid of a priest! Afraid of the truth! Last month, he and his noble friends tried to stop a meeting of the Citizens.

LEANDRE

But we cleaned the streets with them!

A CHEER FROM THE AUDIENCE. SOUND OF A SCUFFLE.

RHODOMONT

We drove the quaking Marquis de La Tour d'Azyr into hiding. And where is he now?

ANDRE-LOUIS

In Nantes! In this very theatre! In a rich man's box, peeping out from behind the blue curtains!

CHEERS, SHOUTS OF *Assassin!, Murderer!, Down with Privilege!, Coward!*, MINGLE WITH SCREAMS, SOUNDS OF BREAKING FURNITURE...PANDEMONIUM. CHABRILLANE STORMS THE STAGE WITH CAZALE, GRABS ANDRE-LOUIS'S ARM.

CHABRILLANE

I'll kill you!

BINET RUSHES ON TO THE STAGE.

BINET

Scoundrel! You've ruined me! You'll pay!

RHODOMONT STEPS BETWEEN ANDRE-LOUIS AND CHABRILLANE, AND IS WOUNDED BY CHABRILLANE. BINET PULLS OUT A PISTOL, AIMS IT AT ANDRE-LOUIS, WHO PULLS HIS STAGE SWORD OUT OF ITS SCABBARD, AND PLUNGES IT INTO BINET'S BELLY, SHOUTING:

ANDRE-LOUIS

Filthy, sordid old pimp!

BINET FALLS TO THE DECK, STILL.

LEANDRE

You'd better run before they kill you! Is Binet dead?

ANDRE-LOUIS

Playing dead. It was a fake sword. (HE REMOVES THE STAGE SWORD.)

RHODOMONT

Too bad. Go....

HE STAGGERS, AND FALLS SLOWLY TO THE FLOOR.

CHABRILLANE

Clown, your braggart-warrior is dead.

ANDRE-LOUIS

Rhodomont!

CHABRILLANE

I did it. (HE BOWS.)

LEANDRE

Run, Scaramouche, run!

A BEAT. ANDRE-LOUIS PICKS UP HIS BUNDLE, RUNS.

END OF ACT I