ACT ONE

Sganarelle and Gusman in a downstairs room of a palace.

SGANARELLE (Holding a snuff box) Whatever Aristotle and the rest of the philosophers say, there's nothing finer than a sniff of snuff. The best people have a passion for it; and anyone who lives without it doesn't deserve to live. Snuff not only cheers and clears your brain, but also improves your soul. You become high-minded; you learn to act like a gentleman. Watch someone take a pinch: he immediately turns friendly, loves to pass the box around, right and left, no matter where he is. He doesn't even wait for the others to ask him; he's ahead of their wishes. That proves how snuff inspires people who take it, makes them kind and honest. Enough of that. Let's go back to our discussion. You say the mistress was shocked when we took off? She came chasing after us because she loves the master so much she can't go on without him? You know what I think? Between us, I'm afraid her love's an investment with a rotten return. There's no real point in Dofia Elvire's trip here. You might as well have stayed put.

GUSMAN Why? Tell me straight, Sganarelle, please. What's behind that depressing remark? Did your master confide in you and say he had to leave because he now feels cool toward us?

SGANARELLE No, but that's how it looks to me. He hasn't spoken one word about it, but I'll bet I'm right. I could be wrong, but I've already seen plenty — enough to make things clear to me.

GUSMAN What? He ran off all of a sudden because he's unfaithful to that pure, loving lady? How could he?

SGANARELLE You see, he's still young and doesn't have the heart —

GUSMAN Could a man of honor act so sneakily?

SGANARELLE Honor? Some handicap that is! As if honor would hold him back...
GUSMAN But the holy bonds of matrimony and... so forth?

SGANARELLE Oh, my poor Gusman, my friend, you still don't realize what sort of man Don Juan is.

GUSMAN True, that I can't imagine, if he has been treacherous. But after he professed so much love and impatience, choked up on so many compliments and vows, sighed, wept, wrote passionate notes and declarations, swore oath after oath, went into ecstasies, raptures, and finally broke into the convent to snatch Doña Elvire away—no, after all that, I certainly don't understand how he could have the heart to go back on his promises.

SGANARELLE Me, I have little trouble understanding it, and if you knew this individual, you'd see it's easy enough for him. I don't say his feelings for Doña Elvire have changed; I'm still not sure. As you know, he ordered me to go ahead, and since he got here he hasn't mentioned it to me. But let me inform you in confidence that Don Juan is the most shameless sinner ever born, a madman, a demon, a brute, a heretic. He doesn't believe in heaven, hell, or werewolves. He lives like a wild beast, like an Epicurean pig—as debauched as Sardanapalus. He shuts his ears to all reproaches; mocks everything people like us believe in. You say he married your mistress: so what? To glut his passion he'd go on to marry you, her dog and her cat. A marriage costs him nothing: it's his usual way of trapping beauties. He'll marry them all. Older women, younger women, middle-class or peasants—they're never too hot or too cold for him. If I told you all the women he's married in different places, I'd be reciting the list till this evening. Gusman, suddenly you've gone pale. But this is no more than a sketch of his personality. To fill in the details of the portrait would take a lot more brushwork. Some day the wrath of heaven will come down on him. I'd much sooner work for the Devil. He makes me witness so many horrors that I wish him somewhere else. But a wicked nobleman is a frightening master. I must remain loyal to him, in spite of myself. My fear drives out my natural enthusiasm; it holds my feelings in check and often reduces me to praising what I detest. He's coming now to explore the palace. Let's not stay together. Listen, though: I've spoken frankly and maybe a little too fast. If anything that came out of my mouth reaches his ears I'll call you a liar.

Exit Gusman. Enter Don Juan.

DON JUAN Who was that talking to you? It looked like Doña Elvire's servant, Gusman.

SGANARELLE Just about.

DON JUAN It was?

SGANARELLE The very man.

DON JUAN He's been in town since when?

SGANARELLE Yesterday evening.

DON JUAN For what purpose?

SGANARELLE You can guess why he's upset.

DON JUAN No doubt because we left.

SGANARELLE He's mortified, poor man. Wanted me to give him the reason.

DON JUAN What did you answer?

SGANARELLE I said you hadn't told me.

DON JUAN But what do you think? What do you make of this business?

SGANARELLE Me? With all respect, I think you're thinking of some new love affair.

DON JUAN That's what you think?

SGANARELLE Yes.

DON JUAN You're not wrong. I confess: someone else has pushed Elvire out of my thoughts.

SGANARELLE Well, good God, I know my Don Juan down to his fingertips. I also know your heart's the greatest runner of all time; it enjoys trotting from one liaison to the next—doesn't like to get stuck in one spot.
DON JUAN And what do you make of that? Am I right?

SGANARELLE Well, master . . .

DON JUAN What? Out with it!

SGANARELLE Of course you're right, if that's what you want. I can't argue there. But if it's not what you want, that's something else again.

DON JUAN No, speak freely. You have my permission. What's your opinion?

SGANARELLE In that case, master, I tell you candidly that I don't approve of your ways. Not at all. I consider it downright ah, naughty to sprinkle your love in every direction.

DON JUAN Do you expect a man to remain the property of the first object that catches him? To give up the world for it? Never to look at anything again? A great idea—to take pride in false morality, to remain forever faithful, shrouded in one passion, with our eyes dead from youth onward to all those beauties elsewhere. No, no: constancy is for corpses. All lovely women deserve the chance to charm us. Because one of them was lucky enough to be the first we met, she has no right to rob the rest of their share of love. I delight in beauty everywhere I find it. I gladly give in to that delicious violence that drags us in its wake. I may utter a pledge, but my love for one beauty doesn't pledge me to be unfair to the others. I keep my eyes open to the fascinations of them all, and confer on each one the most suitable, natural compliments and tributes. I can't withhold my love from everything I find lovable. What happens later—happens. A beautiful face has only to ask for my heart. If I had ten thousand hearts, I'd give them all. There is something indescribable and thrilling in a fresh affair. The entire pleasure of love lies in how it changes. We gradually win over the heart of a young beauty. We see ourselves advancing day by day as we attack her with our adulation and raptures, our tears and sighs pitted against the innocent modesty of an untested soul. We press forward against her petty rebuffs and overcome the scruples she feels she must respect. And at last we gently lead her where we want her to arrive. What a sweet accomplishment! But once we've mastered her, what's left to wish for? Passion is over. Beauty has turned stale. We lull ourselves to sleep unless some new object awakens our desires and holds out the challenge of a fresh conquest. In the end, nothing is more exhilarating than wearing down the resistance of a beautiful woman. In this respect I'm like those empire-builders who flit from victory to victory: the only thing they can't conquer is their ambition. I allow no obstacle to stand in the way of my explosive desires. I have a heart large enough to yearn for the whole earth, and like Alexander, I could wish for other worlds to conquer, but with love.

SGANARELLE My sainted soul, you can talk! As if you'd learned that by heart. As if you read it from a book.

DON JUAN And what do you say to it?

SGANARELLE Good heavens, I say that . . . I don't know what to say. You twist things so that you sound right; yet you're not. I had some clever thoughts ready but that talk of yours has mixed them all up. Let it go for now: I'll write my arguments down; then we'll debate.

DON JUAN Good.

SGANARELLE But do I still have your permission to speak freely, master, if I say I'm sort of shocked at the life you lead?

DON JUAN Oh? What life do I lead?

SGANARELLE A great life. Still, when I see you remarry once a month—

DON JUAN What could be more enjoyable?

SGANARELLE All right, I'll admit it's most enjoyable and entertaining. I could go for it myself if it wasn't wrong. But fooling around like this, master, with holy wedlock, and—

DON JUAN That's between God and me. He and I will sort it out. You don't need to bother about it.

SGANARELLE I always heard that it's wicked to take the Lord's name in vain, and that freethinkers never come to a good end.

DON JUAN Haven't I told you enough times, you dunderhead, that I don't like being admonished?
SGANARELLE  I don’t mean you, God forbid. You know what you’re doing. You have your reasons for being an unbeliever. But there are others, little men who put on a big front, freethinkers who don’t know why; they think it suits them. Now if I had a master like that I’d look him straight in the face and say, “How dare you make fun of God! Aren’t you scared to mock the holiest things? Who gave you the right, you worm, you louse”—I’m speaking to this other master—“the right to ridicule what everyone else worships? Do you think, because you’re a master and wear a frizzy white wig and feathers in your hat and a jacket with gold trimmings and ribbons the color of flames”—I’m not talking to you but to him—“do you think all that makes you smarter, so you can say and do what you please, and nobody will tell you where you get off? I may be your servant, but let me inform you that sooner or later God punishes atheists, and a wicked life will mean a wicked death, and—"

DON JUAN  Stop!

SGANARELLE  Why? What is it?

DON JUAN  “It” is a beautiful girl I’m in love with. I was so attracted I followed her all the way here.

SGANARELLE  But this is where you killed the Commander only six months ago. Aren’t you nervous?

DON JUAN  Why? Didn’t I do it fairly?

SGANARELLE  Very fairly. Yes, very fully. He can’t complain.

DON JUAN  And they pardoned me.

SGANARELLE  Yes, officially, but what about his relatives and friends?

DON JUAN  Let’s not think about the unpleasant things that could happen, only about the pleasure of this moment. The girl I mentioned is engaged, the loveliest thing you ever saw. Her fiancé has just escorted her here. By chance I caught sight of them three or four days before they left. Never have I seen two people so happy with each other. They radiated love. And aroused the same emotion in me. I was struck to the heart: it all began with jealousy. I couldn’t stand seeing them so much in love. My desire was multiplied by spite. I thought about the joy it would give me to break up this tender arrangement, which jarred my sensibilities. But all my efforts so far have proved useless. I have one last remedy. Today he is treating her to a boat trip out to sea. I didn’t tell you before, but I’ve made all the plans for consummating my love. With a little boat and some men I’ve hired, I intend to make off with her.

SGANARELLE  Ah but, master—

DON JUAN  Well?

SGANARELLE  You’re doing the right thing in the morning—always say, when you want something badly, go for it.

DON JUAN  Get yourself ready. You’re coming with me. Make sure you bring all my weapons, so that—(He notices Doña Elvire approaching.) Elvire! That’s infuriating. You dog! You didn’t tell me she was here.

SGANARELLE  You didn’t ask.

DON JUAN  Is she mad to travel to the city without changing her country clothes?

Enter Doña Elvire.

DONA ELVIRE  Won’t you be gracious enough, Don Juan, to acknowledge me? May I at least hope you’ll turn your head in this direction?

DON JUAN  I admit I’m surprised, madame. I didn’t expect you here.

DONA ELVIRE  So I see. You are surprised, but not in the way I was hoping for. Your reception confirms what I kept refusing to believe. I marvel at my innocence and soft heart. I would not face up to this betrayal when it was obvious to me. I was easygoing enough, or rather, silly enough, to deceive myself willingly as I fought against my eyes and my judgment. I found excuses for your declining affection; dreamed up a hundred reasons why you might have rushed away; defended you against the charge leveled by my commonsense. Day after day I brushed aside my suspicions, ignoring the voice in me that pronounced you guilty. I reassured myself by listening, instead, to my fantasies, my ridiculous
yeannings, for I still wanted to believe you faithful. But your
greeting just now destroys my remaining hopes. The look you gave
me tells me much more than I wish to know. And yet I'd be glad to
hear the reasons from your own mouth for your departure. Please,
Don Juan, speak. How will you justify your behavior?

DON JUAN  Here's Sganarelle, madame. He knows my reasons.

SGANARELLE  (Aside, to Don Juan)  Please, master! I don't know
a thing.

DONA ELVIRE  Well? Speak up, Sganarelle. I don't care which one
of you tells me.

DON JUAN  (Beckoning Sganarelle forward)  Go on. Tell her.

SGANARELLE  (Aside, to Don Juan)  What do you want me to say?

DONA ELVIRE  Come closer, if that's what he wants, and let me
know why you went off so abruptly.

DON JUAN  You won't answer?

SGANARELLE  (Aside, to Don Juan)  I have no answer. Master,
you're playing games with me.

DON JUAN  Answer her, I tell you.

SGANARELLE  Madame . . .

DONA ELVIRE  Yes?

SGANARELLE  (Turning back to his master)  Monsieur . . .

DON JUAN  (Threateningly)  If you don't—

SGANARELLE  Madame, the reasons why we left are the empire-
buiiders, Alexander, and the other worlds. There, master, that's all
I can say.

DONA ELVIRE  Don Juan, would you care to shed light on these
mysteries?

DON JUAN  To tell you the truth, madame . . .

DONA ELVIRE  Well, what a weak defense you offer for a courtier,
a man to whom this must be a routine matter! You're all confused.
I pity you. Why not brazen it out? Put on a lofty front. Swear your
feelings for me haven't changed. You still love me with unequalled
warmth. Only death can separate us. Say the most urgent business
compelled you to leave without letting me know. If you are detained
here for a while, against your own wishes, all I have to do is return
home and you'll follow me as soon as you can. You ache to be
back with me because as long as we're apart you suffer the torture
of a body deprived of its soul. Defending yourself like that is much
better than stumbling over your words.

DON JUAN  I own, madame, that I lack the ability to dissemble. I
have a sincere heart. I certainly won't say my feelings for you
haven't changed or that I ache to be back with you. By now it's
evident that I ran away from you — not for the reasons you perhaps
imagine, but out of conscience. I realized I could not go on living
with you in sin. My better feelings returned. My inner eyes opened
and revealed what I was doing. I was stricken to think I had
married you after stealing you from the confines of a cloister; that
you'd broken your holy vows, your first commitment; and that God
frowns jealously on such actions. Repentance overcame me; I was
afraid of His anger. I saw our marriage as no more than adultery in
disguise, which invited a penalty from on high. Therefore, I must
forget you and allow you the opportunity to return to your prior
attachment. Do you oppose this pious resolve, madame? Shall I
keep you and invoke God's revenge? Or—

DONA ELVIRE  Oh, you wretch, now I know you through and
through! It's unfortunately too late — the knowledge only sends me
into despair. But you won't escape the punishment you deserve
from the very God you mock.

DON JUAN  Hear that, Sganarelle? God!

SGANARELLE  Yes, we don't set much store by that, do we?

DON JUAN  Madame —

DONA ELVIRE  Enough. I don't wish to hear any more. I should
have stopped listening before this. It's a disgrace to air my shame at
more length. After the first word an honest soul ought to know
what to do. Never fear: I won't break into names and reproaches.
Oh no. I won't waste my anger on words; I'm saving it for my
revenge. I repeat that God will punish you for your wickedness; and if the thought of God doesn't frighten you, then beware of the fury of an insulted woman. (Exit.)

SGANARELLE (Aside) Maybe he finally feels sorry.

DON JUAN (After reflecting) Let's consider how to put our boating plan into action.

SGANARELLE Oh, what an abominable master!

ACT TWO


CHARLOTTE Good for you, Pierrot. You got to them just in time.

PIERROT I'll say. Close to being drowned they was, the both of 'em.

CHARLOTTE Must have been that storm this morning that turned 'em over.

PIERROT Yeh. Listen, Charlotte, I'll tell you the whole story, the God so help me truth. I seen 'em first; seen 'em first, I did. Me and fat Lucas was kidding around on the beach, throwing sand in each other's eyes, just for kicks. You know fat Lucas: he likes his fun, and me too, I need my kicks once in a while. So there we was, fistfuls of sand flying, when I noticed something 'way out there in the waves jiggling around like it was bobbing toward us. I keep my eyeballs fixed on it till suddenly I see I can't see it.

So I go, "Hey, Lucas, see them men out there swimming?"

And he goes, "Come off it, you must have watched a cat-dee and that give you a squint."

So I go, "Foosey on you, my eyes're as unsquinty as yours. Couple of men, I tell you."

And he goes, "Not a prayer — you're cross-eyed."

So I go, "You want to bet? I'm no cross-eyes. Two men — look at 'em — swimming clear this way."

And he goes, "Crap, I'll bet they never are."

So I go, "You want to lay ten on it?"

And he goes, "Sure do . . . here's my money down."

Me, I'm nobody's fool, Charlotte, not even a halfwit. Bold as you like, I slap down my singles and halfs and quarters, quicker than you could chug a glass of wine, because me, I'm a betting man and when I go, I go the limit. But this time it wasn't no risk. I'm nobody's sucker. Sure enough, soon as we laid the bet, I could see the men again, plain as Lucas' belly, waving to us for help. So I pick up the whole pot and I go, "Lucas, you see 'em now, they're yelling. Let's go save 'em."

So he goes, "Not me. They made me lose."
Well, to cut the story off at the edges, I, you know, lecturize him till he jumps in the boat with me. Out at sea we wrestle and struggle, hup, ho, and drag the both of 'em out of the water and take 'em home to a big fire and they sit and dry off in the raw buff. Later two more of 'em shows up because they rescued themselves out of the water. Next, Mathurine walks in and one of 'em gives her the eye. So that's it, Charlotte, the whole story.

CHARLOTTE But Pierrot, didn't you tell me one of 'em's nicer-looking than the rest?

PIERROT Ah, the master. He's got to be some big, big nobleman, because of the gold all the way up and down his jacket. His servants are kind of nobile, too. Still and all, big-big or not so big, he was a goner if we didn't reached him just in time. Soaked to the gills and suffocated, he was.

CHARLOTTE Come off it...

PIERROT No exaggeration. By now he'd be some shark's dinner.

CHARLOTTE Is he still in the raw buff?

PIERROT Nah, they put all his things back on him. We watched. I never saw nothing like how they dressed him up. Wow! These nobles, what a load o' crap at the end of 'em! Me, I'd lose my way getting into that many clothes. Astounded I was. They wears hair that comes off their head and stick it back on after they dress like it was one of your bonnets. Their shirt sleeves — Charlotte, you and me could take a stroll inside 'em. No knee-breeches, only a flap of wide stuff. It looks like a apron but it stretches from here to next Easter. No doublet, only a shrimpy little vest down to their neck. No collar, only a large scarf like around the neck with tassels hanging down on the belly. On the end of their sleeves they has a sort of collar, and lacy funnels around their knees. And ribbons, Charlottel strings of ribbons over and under and all moving like a bed of worms. Ribbons on their shoes too, front and back! If I was to take one step in them shoes I'd break my neck.

CHARLOTTE Whoo, Pierrot, I got to see some of this!

PIERROT First listen a sec, Charlotte. Let me tell you something.

CHARLOTTE Yes? What's that then?
PIERROT  No, or I'd notice it. Folks show they really love other folks from the floor of their heart by teasing 'em. Chubb Thomasine now, she's out of her skull for young Robin; hangs around him all day, annoys him, won't give him a second to himself; always up to some game with him... whips him on the head every time she goes past him. Or, like the other day, he's sitting on a stool and she tugs it out from under him and he sprawls in the mud. That's real love. But you, you don't never speak a word to me; you sit like a block of wood. If I walk past you twenty times, you won't budge, no, not to walllop me one or swear at me or nothing. That's no good, Charlotte. You're too frigidified.

CHARLOTTE  What can I do about it? That's my personality. I can't be the same's other folks.

PIERROT  This isn't nothing to do with personality. When you have a liking for people you give 'em a sign.

CHARLOTTE  Well, I like you as much as I can. If that's not enough, go love someone else.

PIERROT  See what I mean? If you did love me, would you ever say a thing like that?

CHARLOTTE  How come you keep nagging at me about this?

PIERROT  It wouldn't hurt you, would it, what I'm asking for? Couldn't you be a bit more friendly?

CHARLOTTE  Oh, give it a rest. Then maybe all of a sudden, without thinking about it, it'll happen.

PIERROT  Let's shake on that, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE  Well... all right.

PIERROT  And promise you'll try to love me more.

CHARLOTTE  I'll do what I can, but it'll have to come on its own... Pierrot, is that the nobleman?

PIERROT  Yes, he's the one.

CHARLOTTE  Isn't he pretty! What a shame if he'd went under!

Don Juan

PIERROT  See you soon. I'm pooped. Must down a beer or two and reciprocate some of my energy. (Exit.)

Enter Don Juan and Sganarelle.

DON JUAN  We lost out there, Sganarelle. The storm overturned not only our boat but also our plan. Still, meeting that peasant girl—and what a charmer she is!—offsets our bad luck. I can't let her get away. I've already dropped some hints. She won't keep me waiting and sighing for long.

SGANARELLE  I must say, master, you amaze me. We barely escaped death, and instead of thanking God for His compassion, you're already trying to stir up His wrath with the same old fantasies of love—(Don Juan looks threatening.) Dry up! A lousy servant like you; you have no idea what you're talking about. The master knows what he's up to, doesn't he?

DON JUAN  (Catching sight of Charlotte) Another peasant girl. Where did she come from, Sganarelle? Did you ever see anything prettier? Isn't she better than the other?

SGANARELLE  Definitely. (Aside) Another portrait for the gallery... .

DON JUAN  Well, well! Where did you spring from, enchanting young lady? How is it possible that, among these trees and rocks, I suddenly meet a being formed like you?

CHARLOTTE  You see what you see, monsieur.

DON JUAN  You're from this village?

CHARLOTTE  Yes, monsieur.

DON JUAN  And you live here?

CHARLOTTE  Yes, monsieur.

DON JUAN  What's your name?

CHARLOTTE  Charlotte. At your service.

DON JUAN  You're so lovely! Magnificent eyes!
CHARLOTTE  Monsieur, you make me blush.

DON JUAN  Don't blush to hear the truth. Sganarelle, what do you say? Have you ever come across anything more ravishing? Please, turn around slowly. Ah, a superb figure! Kindly lift your head a bit. Ah, a bewitching face! Open your eyes wide. Magnificent! And just a glimpse of your teeth? Adorable! So are those appetizing lips. I'm overcome. Never have I seen so much charm in one woman.

CHARLOTTE  That's pleasant of you, monsieur, but I hope you're not making fun of me.

DON JUAN  I make fun of you? God forbid! I love you too much, and I say that from the bottom of my heart.

CHARLOTTE  In that case, I'm much obliged.

DON JUAN  Not at all. You're under no obligation to me for what I say. Your beauty has earned it.

CHARLOTTE  You talk too fancy for me, monsieur. I'm not smart — don't know how to reply.

DON JUAN  Sganarelle, take a look at her hands.

CHARLOTTE  Now, now, monsieur. They're black as I don't know what.

DON JUAN  How can you say that? They're the prettiest hands in the world. Let me kiss them, will you?

CHARLOTTE  You're so kind, monsieur. If I'd knew about this before, I'd have cleaned 'em up with bran.

DON JUAN  Tell me then, sweet Charlotte, you're not married, are you?

CHARLOTTE  No, monsieur, but I soon will be, to Pierrot, the son of Simonette, who lives next door.

DON JUAN  What? A woman like you as the wife of some peasant? Never — a wicked waste of all that beauty! You were not born to spend your life in a village. You deserve a much nobler fate. God, who appreciates this, brought me here to put a stop to this marriage and to offer your charms their fitting reward. In other words, I love you, lovely Charlotte, with all my heart. Let me pluck you out of this dismal spot and raise you to the heights you deserve. This love of mine may seem impulsive, but can I help it, when it's the result of your intoxicating beauty? To love as powerfully as I love you after fifteen minutes might, with some other woman, take six months.

CHARLOTTE  Really, monsieur, I don't know what to do when you talk that way. I do like it, and I'd give anything to believe you. But I've always been told a girl can't trust the things gentlemen say to her, especially you people from the court. You tempt us to get your own way with us girls.

DON JUAN  I am not one of those people.

SGANARELLE  (Aside)  Not on your life.

CHARLOTTE  Look, monsieur, it's no fun being deceived. I'm a poor country girl, but I'm proud of my good name. I'd sooner see myself dead than dishonored.

DON JUAN  Could I be evil enough to deceive a person of your caliber? Or treacherous enough to dishonor you? Never! I have too strong a conscience. I love you, Charlotte — and I mean honorably. To prove I speak the truth, I swear my only desire is to marry you. Is that sufficient? I'm ready as soon as you say yes. I ask this man here to witness that I will keep my word.

SGANARELLE  Don't worry, girl. He'll marry you all you want.

DON JUAN  Charlotte, I see you don't yet know me. You misjudge me badly when you compare me with others. Perhaps there are some despicable men who try to get what they can from young women, but you mustn't count me among them or doubt my honesty. Besides, your beauty should reassure you. Anyone with your looks is safe from such misgivings. Believe me, everything about you affirms that you are not a woman who could be exploited. As for me, I'll forever think, even for a flicker of a second, of deceiving you, I'd put a thousand knives into my heart.

CHARLOTTE  Oh, I'm so befuddled! I don't know if you're telling the truth, but you make me want to believe you.
DON JUAN Believe me, believe me! Don't be unfair. Didn't I give you my promise? Will you accept it? Will you be my wife?

CHARLOTTE Yes. If my aunt lets me.

DON JUAN Good. You yourself want to, Charlotte, so shake hands on it.

CHARLOTTE You wouldn't let me down after this, monsieur, would you? That'd be sinful when me, I'm sincere.

DON JUAN No! You don't still doubt my sincerity? Shall I utter some terrible oaths? May God strike —

CHARLOTTE No, don't swear! I believe you.

DON JUAN How about a little kiss to seal your word?

CHARLOTTE Please, monsieur, after we're married. Then I'll give you as many kisses as you want.

DON JUAN What I want, my sweet Charlotte, is what you want; so let me take your hand and smother it in unending love to express my joy at . . .

Re-enter Pierrot.

PIERROT (Bobbing up between them and pushing Don Juan away) Not so hot, monsieur. Cool off your lungs or you'll catch pustule.

DON JUAN (Shoving him back roughly) Who sent this yokel here?

PIERROT (Dodging between Charlotte and Don Juan again) Keep your distance, I tell you. No handling my sweetheart!

DON JUAN (Shoving him aside again) What is all this bluster?

PIERROT What's all this shoving folks around?

CHARLOTTE (Taking Pierrot's arm) Pierrot, let him alone.

PIERROT Let him alone? Not me!

DON JUAN Ha!

PIERROT Just 'cause you're some gentleman, you think you can kiss our wives in front of us? Go kiss your own.

DON JUAN Hey?

PIERROT Hey. (Don Juan slaps him.) Watch it! You better not hit me again. (Another slap.) That does it! (Another slap.) Oh boy! (Another slap.) Dirty devils and horse droppings! You can't hit people like this. Some kind of reward, this is, for saving you from going under!

CHARLOTTE Pierrot, don't lose your temper.

PIERROT I will lose my temper, and you, you're a slut to let him fondle you.

CHARLOTTE No, Pierrot, it's not what you think. The gentleman wants to marry me, so you shouldn't get mad.

PIERROT What? When we're engaged?

CHARLOTTE That doesn't count now, Pierrot. If you love me, you ought to be happy I'm going to be a lady.

PIERROT Am I hell! I'd rather see you dead than somebody else's alive.

CHARLOTTE Now, now, Pierrot, don't fret. Once I'm a lady I'll see you do all right out of it. You can sell us your butter and cheese.

PIERROT I wouldn't sell you a thing, not if you paid me twice. A lady! Is that what he said? And you listened? Shoot, if I knew then, I'd never have fished him out of the water. I'd have bumped him one on the bonko with my oar.

DON JUAN (Closing in on Pierrot) What did you say?

PIERROT (Keeping Charlotte in front of him) You don't scare me.

DON JUAN (Circling Charlotte) Stand still, then.

PIERROT (Moving around Charlotte) I laugh in your chops. Ha!
DON JUAN (Still in pursuit) We'll see about that.

PIERROT (Behind Charlotte again) I know your type.

DON JUAN Yes . . .

SGANARELLE Leave him, master. Poor wretch, it's not fair to hit him. (To Pierrot, stepping between him and Don Juan) Listen, lad, take off and don't say another word.

PIERROT (Passing Sganarelle and confronting Don Juan) I'll say what I like.

DON JUAN I'll teach you.

*He swings at Pierrot, who ducks and stays down. Sganarelle takes the blow.*

SGANARELLE (Looking down at Pierrot) You goddam idiot.

DON JUAN A reward for your soft heart.

PIERROT I'm going to tell her aunt about all this hoopla. (Exit.)

DON JUAN At last I'm going to be the happiest man alive. I wouldn't exchange my luck for all the wealth in the world. What with the pleasure of having you for my wife, and —

Sganarelle notices Mathurine approaching. He lets out a laugh, then corrects it to a warning cough.

MATHURINE (To Don Juan) What are you doing there, monsieur, with Charlotte? Are you talking love to her too?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) No, the reverse. She let me know she'd like to be my wife, and I told her I was engaged to you.

CHARLOTTE What does Mathurine want with you, then?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) She's jealous. She saw me speaking to you, and wants me to marry her, but I told her I want you.

MATHURINE What? Charlotte —

Don Juan

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) Don't waste your time speaking to her. She's set on this notion.

CHARLOTTE What's all this? Mathurine —

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) She won't listen to you. You can't get this fantasy out of her head.

MATHURINE Does she —?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) You can't make her see reason.

CHARLOTTE I'd like —

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) She's as stubborn as the devil.

MATHURINE Really —

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) Don't argue with her. She's crazy.

CHARLOTTE I think —

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) Let her be. She's obsessed.

MATHURINE No, no. I must speak to her.

CHARLOTTE I must find out why.

MATHURINE What —?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) I'll bet she says I promised to marry her.

CHARLOTTE I —

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) What do you bet she insists I said I'd make her my wife?

MATHURINE Hey, Charlotte, it's not fair to cut in on other people.

CHARLOTTE It's not right, Mathurine, to get jealous when this gentleman talks to me.
MATHURINE He saw me first.

CHARLOTTE If he saw you first, he saw me second. And promised to marry me.

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) Well, what did I say?

MATHURINE Get out of here. It's me, not you, he promised to marry.

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) Didn't I guess?

CHARLOTTE Please, save that for someone else. It's me, I say.

MATHURINE Are you joking? It's me.

CHARLOTTE He'll back me. Ask him if I'm telling a lie.

MATHURINE If I'm not telling the truth, he won't back me.

CHARLOTTE Is it true, monsieur? Did you promise to marry her?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) You're making fun of me.

MATHURINE Is it true, monsieur? Did you swear you'd be her husband?

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) How could you think that?

CHARLOTTE But look, she insists.

DON JUAN (Aside, to Charlotte) Let her.

MATHURINE She says it in front of you.

DON JUAN (Aside, to Mathurine) Let her.

CHARLOTTE No, no. We must get the truth.

MATHURINE We must get it straight.

CHARLOTTE Yes, Mathurine, I want monsieur to show you up.

MATHURINE Yes, Charlotte, I want monsieur to put you down.

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Don Juan

CHARLOTTE Please, monsieur, settle the argument.

MATHURINE Yes, monsieur, untangle the whole thing.

CHARLOTTE (To Mathurine) Now you'll see.

MATHURINE (To Charlotte) You’ll see.

CHARLOTTE (To Don Juan) Tell us.

MATHURINE (To Don Juan) Speak.

DON JUAN (Embarrassed, to both of them) What do you want me to say? You both contend that I've promised to marry you. Each of you knows how we really stand, don't you, without any further explaining from me? Why make me say it again? The one to whom I actually gave my promise can laugh at the other one. Does she have anything to worry about, so long as I keep that promise? All this talk is getting us nowhere. We must act, not discuss. It's the results that count, not the words. This is the only way I can settle the argument. You'll see, when I marry you, which one I love. (Aside, to Mathurine) Let her think what she likes. (Aside, to Charlotte) Let her indulge her imagination. (Aside, to Mathurine) I adore you. (Aside, to Charlotte) I belong to you. (Aside to Mathurine) Other faces are ugly compared to yours. (Aside to Charlotte) I look at you and all the others seem repulsive. (To both) I have some business to take care of. I'll be back for you in a quarter of an hour. (Exit)

CHARLOTTE So it's me he loves.

MATHURINE It's me he'll marry.

SGANARELLE You poor girls. You're so innocent I feel sorry for you. I hate to see you racing toward disaster. Believe me, both of you: take no notice of the tales you hear. Stay in your village.

DON JUAN (As he returns, aside) I'd love to know why Sganarelle didn't come with me.

SGANARELLE My master is a phony. All he wants is to have his way with you, as he's done with so many others. He'd marry the whole human race if — (Noticing Don Juan) That's untrue. Whoever told you that, call him a liar. My master would never
marry the whole human race. He is not a phony. He does not want
to have his way with you, and he has not had his way with others.
See, here he is. Ask him.

DON JUAN (Suspiciously, glaring at Sganarelle) Yes.

SGANARELLE Master, the world is crowded with slander-mongers.
But trust me to beat them back. I was saying that if anyone says an
unfavorable word about you, these two mustn’t believe it. They
must call him a liar.

DON JUAN Sganarelle!

SGANARELLE Yes, my master’s a man of honor, that I guarantee.

DON JUAN Hm . . .

SGANARELLE People of that sort are contemptible.

Enter La Ramée.

LA RAMÉE (Aside, to Don Juan) Monsieur, I must warn you that
this is not a healthy spot for you.

DON JUAN Why not?

LA RAMÉE A dozen horsemen are looking for you. They should
be here any moment. I think I know how they managed to follow
you. I heard the news from a peasant. When they questioned him,
they described you. It’s urgent. The sooner you get away from
here, the better. (Exit.)

DON JUAN (To Charlotte and Mathurine) I’m called away
suddenly on business. But I want you to remember my promise.
You’ll hear from me before tomorrow evening. (Exeunt Charlotte
and Mathurine.) Twelve against one: I’ll need some clever strategy
to escape them. I’ll have you put on my clothes, Sganarelle, while
I —

SGANARELLE Master, don’t toy with me. In your clothes I could
get killed, and —

DON JUAN Let’s move. You should feel honored. It’s a lucky
servant who has the glory of dying for his master. (Exit.)
ACT THREE

A forest. Don Juan in country costume, Sganarelle in a doctor's garb.

SGANARELLE Wasn't I right, master? These are marvelous get-ups. Your idea wouldn't have worked. This way we're much better disguised.

DON JUAN Yes, you look fine, though I can't imagine where you unearthed that ridiculous outfit.

SGANARELLE The gown belonged to an old doctor, who had pawned it. I paid out of my own pocket. But you know what, master? People I meet look up to me, bow politely, take me for a learned man, and want to consult me.

DON JUAN For what?

SGANARELLE Five or six peasants so far, men and women — they stopped me and asked about their illnesses.

DON JUAN And you said you had no idea.

SGANARELLE Me? Not a bit. I wanted to uphold the dignity of my gown. I diagnosed each illness and gave out prescriptions.

DON JUAN What remedies did you prescribe?

SGANARELLE Any that occurred to me. Guesswork. If would be a laugh if they were cured and came back to thank me.

DON JUAN Why shouldn't they be cured? Is there any reason for you not to enjoy the same privileges as other doctors? They do no more than you in healing the sick. Their talent is pure invention. They win a reputation on the strength of flaky recoveries; that's all. Like them, you might as well benefit from the patient's luck, and accept the credit for the magic forces of chance and nature.

SGANARELLE Master, don't tell me you disbelieve in medicine, too?

DON JUAN It's one of mankind's greatest follies.

SGANARELLE What? You don't believe in senna pods or cassia or that wine that makes you throw up?

DON JUAN Why do you expect me to believe in them?

SGANARELLE You have the soul of an infidel. You know, everybody's talking about that wine lately. Its miracle cures have converted the biggest skeptics. Only three weeks ago I myself saw it in action.

DON JUAN What happened?

SGANARELLE A man had been in agony for six days. Nobody knew what to do for him. All the remedies had failed. So finally they gave him the wine.

DON JUAN And he recovered?

SGANARELLE No. He died.

DON JUAN Brilliant result.

SGANARELLE I'll say. For six days he'd been trying to die. But the wine blanked him out in a second. What could be more effective?

DON JUAN You're right.

SGANARELLE But let's move away from medicine, which you don't believe in, and talk about other things, because this gown makes me bold and I feel like disputing with you. Remember, you said I can disagree so long as I don't reproach you.

DON JUAN Well?

SGANARELLE I'd like to probe your thoughts. Can it be that you don't believe in God at all?

DON JUAN Let that go.
SGANARELLE In other words, no. And in hell?
DON JUAN Huh!
SGANARELLE Same again. And in the devil, if you don't mind?
DON JUAN Yes, yes.
SGANARELLE No again. But don't you even believe in the afterlife?
DON JUAN Ha, ha, ha!
SGANARELLE This is one man I'll have a hard time converting. Tell me now: what do you think of hobgoblins, poltergeists, and other evil spirits?
DON JUAN You numskull!
SGANARELLE I can't accept that. Nothing's more real than evil spirits. I'd defend them to the death. A person must have faith in something. What do you believe?
DON JUAN What I believe?
SGANARELLE Yes.
DON JUAN I believe, Sganarelle, that two and two are four and four and four are eight.
SGANARELLE That's a belief? Those are articles of faith? From what I gather, your religion is simple arithmetic. People get strange ideas in their heads. They study hard and often grow less wise. Take me, master: I haven't studied the way you have, not a bit, thank God. Nobody can boast of ever having taught me anything. But with my modest share of sense and judgment, I understand what's what better than all the books. I realize that this world we see is not a mushroom that sprang up overnight. So let me put it to you: Who made those trees, these rocks, this earth, and the sky up there? Did it all create itself? Or you, for instance. There you are — did you create yourself? Didn't your father have to do something to your mother? Can you look at all the components of the human machine without marveling at how they function together — these nerves, these bones, these veins, these arteries, these . . . this

Don Juan

lung, this heart, this liver, and all these other organs that . . . Blast it! don't you want to interrupt? I can't go on arguing without interruptions. You deliberately say nothing; you let me keep talking out of spite.

DON JUAN I'm waiting for you to clinch your argument.

SGANARELLE My argument is that there's something miraculous in mankind, whatever you say, something all the scholars can't explain. Isn't it a miracle that here I am with a thing in my head that thinks all these different thoughts at once and makes my body do what it commands? I want to clap my hands, raise my arm, lift my eyes to heaven, lower my head, move my feet, go right, go left, forward, back, turn . . . (While turning, he falls.)

DON JUAN You broke your argument's nose.

SGANARELLE I'm a prize fool to waste time reasoning with you. Believe what you want: I don't care whether you'll be damned.

DON JUAN During this argument I think we got lost. Call out to that man. Ask him the way.

SGANARELLE Hey there! Hey, fellow! Hey, friend! One word, please.

(Enter a Poor Man.) Where's the road to the town?

THE POOR MAN Keep to this track, gentlemen, and turn right at the edge of the forest. But I advise you to be on guard. For a while now we've had robbers in these parts.

DON JUAN I'm grateful to you, friend. My warmest thanks.

THE POOR MAN Could you help me out, monsieur?

DON JUAN Ha, ha! Your advice, I see, had a selfish motive.

THE POOR MAN I'm poor, monsieur, living alone in this wood for ten years. I'll pray God to give you all kinds of bounty.

DON JUAN Pray for decent clothes for yourself. Don't worry about others.
SGANARELLE My dear man, you don't know this gentleman. All he believes is that two and two are four and four and four are eight.

DON JUAN How do you occupy yourself in this forest?

THE POOR MAN I pray God every day to grant prosperity to the kind people who give me something.

DON JUAN Then you must be quite comfortable.

THE POOR MAN Unfortunately, monsieur, I'm in desperate need.

DON JUAN You're joking. A man who prays all day couldn't be too badly off.

THE POOR MAN Honestly, monsieur, most of the time I don't have a bit of bread to bite into.

DON JUAN Strange. Your good deeds go unrewarded. (Laughing) Here: I'll give you a gold coin so long as you utter a blasphemy.

THE POOR MAN Monsieur, you don't expect me to sin?

DON JUAN Never mind that. Do you or don't you want to earn this gold coin? It's yours, as soon as you curse. (Withdrawing it) Not yet. Curse!

THE POOR MAN Monsieur . . .

DON JUAN If you don't, you can't have it.

SGANARELLE Go ahead, curse a little. Won't do any harm.

DON JUAN Take it. I'm telling you to take it. After you curse.

THE POOR MAN No, monsieur. I'd rather die hungry.

DON JUAN All right, I give it to you — for the love of humanity. But what's going on there? One man attacked by three? That's cowardly, disgusting — I can't stomach that. (Exit.)

SGANARELLE My master's a maniac to risk his life when he doesn't have to. But see, his help turned the trick. The two of them have scared off the other three.

Don Juan

Exit the Poor Man. Enter Don Carlos, sword in hand.}

DON CARLOS You have a mighty arm, monsieur. The flight of those robbers proves it. I thank you for your courageous assistance, and —

DON JUAN (Reappearing, sword in hand) You'd have done the same in my place, monsieur. Under these circumstances it was a matter of honor. The cowards! If I hadn't intervened, I'd have sided with them in effect. How did they happen to catch you?

DON CARLOS I'd lost my brother and friends. While I was looking for them, the robbers pounced on me, killed my horse, and without your selfless efforts, would have done the same to me.

DON JUAN Are you making for the town?

DON CARLOS Yes, but not to enter it. My brother and I must keep to the countryside, thanks to one of those miserable affairs that turn noblemen and their families into self-sacrificing slaves of honor. At best, when we're successful, we can only come to a sad end. If we don't say good-by to life, we must flee into exile and say good-by to our homeland. That is why I consider a nobleman's lot unfortunate. Prudent, law-abiding behavior doesn't protect him from the recklessness of others. His existence, his peace, and his belongings depend on the whims of the first rash fellow who insults him. To answer such provocations, an honorable man may have to die.

DON JUAN There is one compensation in dealing with those who take it into their heads to offend us: we make them run the same risks as we do and we give them an equally hard time. Will it be indiscreet if I inquire about this family affair?

DON CARLOS There's little sense now in keeping it secret. Once it becomes known we will not attempt to conceal our shame for mere reasons of honor. No, let our revenge become equally known, together with our plan for accomplishing it. And so, monsieur, I may as well tell you outright that our sister was seduced and abducted from a convent by a certain Don Juan Tenorio, the son of Don Louis Tenorio. We have searched for him for several days. This morning we followed a lead provided by a servant. Don Juan apparently rode out of town along this coastal route with four or five companions. But in spite of our careful tracking, we have not found him.
DON JUAN  Do you know this Don Juan?

DON CARLOS  Not personally. Only from my brother's description and his own ugly reputation. His life has been —

DON JUAN  No more, monsieur, please. He is a sort of friend of mine. It would be ignoble of me to bear him discredited.

DON CARLOS  I won't speak of him further, monsieur, out of gratitude to you. The least I can do after you have saved my life is to refrain in your presence, since you are his acquaintance and I have nothing to say in his favor. But although he is a sort of friend of yours, I hope you do not approve of what he did or find it strange that we are bent on revenge.

DON JUAN  On the contrary, I'd like to help and spare you further trouble. I can't very well prevent myself from being Don Juan's friend, but he should not affront gentlemen without facing the consequences, and I will see that he makes reparation.

DON CARLOS  What reparation can atone for such misdeeds?

DON JUAN  Whatever satisfies your honor. You need not trouble yourself to seek Don Juan further. I will have him appear when and where you wish.

DON CARLOS  That prospect, monsieur, sounds gratifying to one of the injured parties. But after what I owe you, I am distressed to see you on the opposing side.

DON JUAN  I am so close to Don Juan that he could not fight unless I joined him. And so I answer for him as though for myself, and you have only to say when you would like him to appear and make reparation.

DON CARLOS  A cruel coincidence — I owe my life to a friend of Don Juan!

Enter Don Alonso with three followers.

DON ALONSO (To his men, not seeing Don Carlos or Don Juan) Let the horses drink over there and bring them after us. I'll walk for a while. (Noticing the others) What! Can I believe my eyes? My brother with our enemy?

DON CARLOS  Our enemy?

Don Juan steps back three paces and rests his hand on his sword hilt.

DON JUAN  Yes, I am Don Juan. Your advantage in numbers cannot make me renounce my name.

DON ALONSO (Drawing his sword) Die then for it!

Sganarelle runs for cover.

DON CARLOS  No, brother! I owe him my life. Without his aid I'd have been killed by thieves.

DON ALONSO  Will you let that consideration block our revenge? All the favors we receive from an enemy hand have no power over us. When we compare the debt with the injury, your gratitude seems ridiculous. Honor is infinitely more precious than life. We owe nothing to a man who has saved your life but stolen our honor.

DON CARLOS  I appreciate the distinction a gentleman must always draw between the two. My gratitude does not oblate my resentment. But let me now repay that life he gave me. I will meet him here in a few days and allow him that much liberty to enjoy the reward for his generous act.

DON ALONSO  No! By putting off our revenge, we may lose it. The chance may never come again. Heaven offers it here and now, and we must make the most of it. We cannot think of pulling back when our honor has suffered so grave a wound. If you find it repugnant to attack him now, stand aside and I'll seize this golden opportunity.

DON CARLOS  Brother, I beg of you —

DON ALONSO  All this useless chatter! He must die.

DON CARLOS  I say again: stop! I swear I will not allow him to be attacked by anyone. I'll defend him to the life, this same life he saved. Before you can reach him with your sword you will have to cut past me.
DON ALONSE What! You ally yourself with your enemy against your brother? Instead of being enraged like me at the sight of him, you turn soft and sympathetic?

DON CARLOS We can afford, brother, to be moderate in a just cause, and to avenge our honor without getting carried away, as you are. We can master our hearts, be brave without being savage, and rule our actions with reason, not blind fury. I do not wish to remain indebted to my enemy, and I must, as a priority, settle my obligation to him. Our vengeance will not be compromised because we postpone it; no, it will be more impressive. This opportunity that we have had and chosen to delay will make that vengeance appear more just in the eyes of the world.

DON ALONSE Oh this strange weakness, this fearful blindness! You jeopardize the demands of our honor with your foolish notion of a debt.

DON CARLOS No, brother, don't fret. If I am in error, I'll know how to put it right. I accept the responsibility for our honor; I am aware of what it entails. By putting off the day of reckoning for the sake of my gratitude I increase, not quench, my burning desire for satisfaction. Don Juan, you will note that I am careful to requite the gift of life I had from you. You can judge me accordingly. I pay back a debt as warmly as I acknowledge it, and I shall be as exact in responding to your offense as I am to your gift. I am not asking you to explain your intentions now. You are free to decide at your leisure what you must do. You understand how seriously you have affronted us. I leave it to you to determine what compensation is required. Will it be peace or violence and blood? Either will satisfy us. Whichever you choose, you have given your word that I shall receive reparation from Don Juan. Do not forget! Remember also that from now on I am indebted only to my honor.

DON JUAN I have asked you for nothing. I will live up to my promise.

DON CARLOS Come, brother. This brief respite will not weaken our resolve.

*Exeunt Don Carlos and Don Alonse.*

DON JUAN Hey, Sganarelle!

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SGANARELLE *Coming out of hiding* Beg your pardon?

DON JUAN Jellyfish! You take off, do you, when I'm in danger?

SGANARELLE Forgive me, master. I didn't go far. Putting on this doctor's gown is like taking medicine. It works the same as a laxative.

DON JUAN Damn your excuses! Find a better covering for your cowardice. Do you realize whose life I saved before?

SGANARELLE I don't.

DON JUAN Elvire's brother.

SGANARELLE Her —

DON JUAN A pleasant man. He treated me fairly. I regret we're at odds.

SGANARELLE It's easy for you to settle things peacefully.

DON JUAN Yes, but I have no passion left for Doña Elvire, and I'm in no mood to marry her. You know how I must be free to love, not to lock my heart up inside four walls. As I've told you many times, I follow the line of least resistance toward whatever appeals to me. Every beautiful woman deserves a share of my affections. It's up to each one to take her turn and hold on to them for as long as she can. . . . Look — what is that imposing structure I see between the trees?

SGANARELLE You don't recognize it?

DON JUAN No I don't.

SGANARELLE Well! That's the tomb the Commander was putting up for himself when you killed him.

DON JUAN You're right. I didn't know it was near here. I've been told so much about it. Very impressive, I hear, and so is his statue. I'd like to look at it close up.

SGANARELLE Don't go in, master.
DON JUAN    Why not?

SGANARELLE  It's not polite to visit a man you've killed.

DON JUAN    On the contrary, I'll pay my respects. And he should welcome me graciously if he's a gentleman. Let's go inside.

The tomb opens. Inside: a superb mausoleum and the Commander's statue.

SGANARELLE  That's really nice. Nice statues. Nice marble. Nice columns. Very nice all around. Don't you think so?

DON JUAN    A dead man couldn't wish for anything more ambitious. What strikes me is that a man who was happy with a simple home when he was alive should want so elaborate a home when he can't enjoy it.

SGANARELLE  Here's the Commander's statue.

DON JUAN    Splendid! The costume of a Roman emperor. Very suitable!

SGANARELLE  Great workmanship. So realistic. He looks alive and ready to speak. I'd be nervous if I was on my own, the way he's staring down. I wouldn't say he's pleased to see us.

DON JUAN    That's very wrong of him when I've come to pay my respects. Ask him if he'll join me for supper.

SGANARELLE  I'd say that's one thing he doesn't need.

DON JUAN    Ask him, I tell you.

SGANARELLE  You're not serious? Talk to a statue? I'm not crazy.

DON JUAN    Do as you're told.

SGANARELLE  This is spooky! My lord Commander... (Aside) Can't help laughing. I feel like a fool. But my master insists... (Aloud) My lord Commander, my master Don Juan asks whether you will do him the honor of joining him for supper. (The Statue nods.) Oo-ah!
ACT FOUR

Don Juan, Sganarelle, and Ragotin in a room in Don Juan's home.

DON JUAN  Whatever it was, let's leave it at that, nothing unusual — the dim lighting, which misled us, or a sudden giddy sensation, which distorted our vision.

SGANARELLE  Master, don't try to deny what we saw with our own eyes. Nothing could have been plainer than that nod of the head. I feel certain that God, who's appalled by your goings-on, showed you a miracle to convince you to stop and —

DON JUAN  Listen. If you keep nagging at me with your stupid morality, if you say one more word about it, I'll send for a bullwhip and three or four men to hold you down, and I'll flog you one thousand times. Is that clear?

SGANARELLE  Crystal clear, master. You explain yourself with such lucidity. That's what I like about you. You don't quibble. You say what's on your mind, all the essential details.

DON JUAN  Have them bring in my supper as soon as possible. Ragotin, my chair!

Enter La Violette.

LA VIOLETTE  Master, that merchant Monsieur Dimanche wants to speak to you.

SGANARELLE  Great, that's all we need, a call from a creditor. What makes him think he can stroll in here asking for money? Why didn't you tell him the master's not home?

LA VIOLETTE  I did, for three-quarters of an hour. He doesn't believe it. He sat down inside there to wait.

SGANARELLE  He can wait as long as he wants.

DON JUAN  Not at all. Send him in. Avoiding your creditors is a bad policy. It's better to make some payment. I know a way to send them off satisfied without giving them a penny.

Enter Monsieur Dimanche, escorted by flunkies.

DON JUAN  (With great civility) Ah, Dimanche, do come in. I'm delighted to see you and furious with my servants for not bringing you here right away. I ordered them not to admit anyone, but the order does not apply to you. To you my door is always open.

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'm very grateful, monsieur.

DON JUAN  (To his lackeys) Ruffians, how dare you keep Dimanche waiting in the hallway! I'll teach you to recognize my friends.

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  It was nothing, monsieur.

DON JUAN  Nothing? Saying I was out to my closest friend!

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  Your servant, monsieur. I've come to —

DON JUAN  Quick, here: a chair for Dimanche!

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'm all right here, monsieur.

DON JUAN  Not at all. I want you to sit next to me.

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  That's not necessary.

DON JUAN  Remove this stool! Bring him an armchair!

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  Don't bother, monsieur, to —

DON JUAN  No bother. I'm aware how much I owe you, and I'll have no distinction made between us.

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  Monsieur —

DON JUAN  Come, sit down.

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  There's no need to, monsieur. I want a quick word with you. I was —
DON JUAN  Sit down there, will you?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'm fine as I am, monsieur. I came to —
DON JUAN  No, I won't listen till you sit.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  (Sitting)  As you wish, monsieur. I —
DON JUAN  God in heaven, Dimanche, you do look well.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  Yes, monsieur. Thank you, monsieur. I'm here to —
DON JUAN  Fit as a fiddle, eh? Red lips, fresh cheeks, and bright eyes.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'd like to —
DON JUAN  How is your wife?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  Very well, monsieur, praise God.
DON JUAN  A lovable woman.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  She'd thank you for that, monsieur. I'm hoping to —
DON JUAN  And little Claudine, your daughter?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  As well as can be.
DON JUAN  What a pretty girl! I love her dearly.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  You're too kind, monsieur. Could you —?
DON JUAN  How about young Colin? Is he still making all that din banging on his drum?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  As much as ever, monsieur. I wonder —
DON JUAN  And your little dog, Barker? Does he still growl ferociously and sink his teeth into the legs of your visitors?

Don Juan

MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  More than ever, monsieur. We don't know how to stop him.
DON JUAN  You won't be surprised that I ask after your family. I take a personal interest in them all.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  We're extremely grateful, monsieur. And I —
DON JUAN  (Holding out his hand)  Give me your hand on that, Dimanche. You do feel like one of my friends, don't you?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'm your servant, monsieur.
DON JUAN  God in heaven, I'm so fond of you!
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  You're too kind. I —
DON JUAN  There's nothing I wouldn't do for you.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I'm deeply obliged to you, monsieur.
DON JUAN  And not for selfish reasons, believe me.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  I don't deserve the compliment. But monsieur —
DON JUAN  Let's drop the formality, Dimanche. Will you join me for supper?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  No, monsieur, I must get back right away. I —
DON JUAN  (Standing)  Quick, a torch for Dimanche! Four or five of you, take your muskets and escort him home.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE  (Standing)  No need for all that, monsieur. I can manage very well on my own. But —
Sganarelle promptly takes out the chairs.
DON JUAN  Please! I want you to have an escort. You mean a great deal to me. I'm at your service, and also in your debt.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE Exactly, monsieur, and —
DON JUAN I wouldn't hide it. I tell everyone.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE If —
DON JUAN Would you like me to walk you outside?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE Ah, monsieur, that's more than I —
DON JUAN Very well, then. A brotherly embrace ... Please!
(Embracing him) Remember, call on me at any time for anything. I am unequivocally yours. (Exit.)
SGANARELLE I must say the master's very attached to you.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE True. He's so polite and affable I'll never be able to ask for my money.
SGANARELLE He's not the only one. Every person in this household would go the limit for you. I only wish someone would try to do you harm, beat you up, let's say. You'd soon see how we'd die before we —
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE I believe you. But Sganarelle, couldn't you please put in a word for me about my money?
SGANARELLE Don't worry. He'll pay you unequivocally.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE And you, Sganarelle? The amount you owe me?
SGANARELLE Pool! Let's not talk about that.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE What? I —
SGANARELLE Don't I know what I owe you?
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE Yes, but —
SGANARELLE Come, Dimanche. (Taking a torch) I'll enlighten you.
MONSIEUR DIMANCHE But my money —?
Can you bask in the lofty reputation of our blood line when you lead a life of infamy? No, no, birth means nothing without virtue. We share in our ancestors’ glory only so long as we do our utmost to resemble them. The reflections of their greatness, falling on us, are a commitment: we will reciprocate by following their example; we will not fall away from their high standards if we wish to be judged their true heirs. You do not belong to the men from whom you descend. They reject you, and you cannot claim any advantage from their brilliant achievements. Just the reverse: those achievements show you up for what you are. They serve as a torch that lights up your disgrace for the whole world to see. A nobleman who lives by evil is a natural monster. The first title to nobility is rectitude. For me the name a man signs counts for much less than the actions he performs, and I esteem a farm-laborer’s honest son more highly than a king’s son who lives as you do.

DON JUAN Take a seat, father; you’ll be more comfortable talking.

DON LOUIS No, I will not sit down or say any more, because I see that my words don’t touch you. But I will tell you, my mockery of a son, that you have pushed my natural affection as a father beyond the limits. Sooner than you think, I will put a stop to your wickedness before God’s wrath overtakes you. With your punishment I will wash away the shame of having given you birth. (Exit.)

DON JUAN The sooner you drop dead the better. You had your turn. It infuriates me when fathers live as long as their sons. (He sits in an armchair.)

SGANARELLE No, master, you’re wrong.

DON JUAN I’m wrong?

SGANARELLE Master —

DON JUAN (Standing up) I am wrong?

SGANARELLE Yes, master, you’re wrong to have put up with what he said. You should have grabbed him and turned him out. What a nerve! A father comes and chews out his son, tells him to mend his ways, remember his birth, lead a proper life, and all that other rubbish! And to a man like you who knows how to live — how could you swallow it? Your patience amazes me. If I were you,

Don Juan

I’d have sent him on his way, fast. (Aside) Curse this obedience! I’m lower than the lowest.

DON JUAN Will they bring in my supper?

Enter Ragotin.

RAGOTIN Monsieur, this lady wearing a veil wants to speak to you.

DON JUAN Who can it be?

SGANARELLE We’ll have to see.

Enter Doña Elvire.

DONA ELVIRE Are you surprised, Don Juan, to see me at this hour and in these clothes? I had to come and speak to you without delay. I am no longer incensed, as I was this morning, no longer the Doña Elvire who railed against you, threatened you, and swore vengeance. God has lifted from my heart all traces of my unseemly passion for you, all those excesses of a sinful infatuation, that disgusting exhibition of crude, worldly love. He has purified my love for you, cleansed it of its sensuality, left it sacred, detached, unselfish, intending only what is best for you.

DON JUAN (To Sganarelle) You’re weeping, I think.

SGANARELLE I’m sorry.

DONA ELVIRE This untainted love brings me here, in your interest, to let you know the will of heaven and try to win you back from the brink of doom, which you have now reached. Yes, Don Juan, I know of all the disorder in your life. And yet God, Who touched my heart and showed me my own errors, has inspired me to visit you and say that your offenses have used up His mercy. His terrible wrath is about to overwhelm you, unless you promptly repent. You may now have less than one day in which to shield yourself from the greatest of all misfortunes. As for me, I am no longer bound to you in an earthly sense. I have turned away from my folly, thanks be to Him. I am going into seclusion. I hope for nothing more than enough time to atone for my sins and earn forgiveness by devout penance for my impulsive and deplorable passion. In my seclusion I will grieve deeply if a person who has been very dear to me becomes a fatal example of God’s justice. But
what joy I will feel if I can persuade you to avert the terrifying punishment that hangs over you! I implore you, Don Juan, as a final favor—grant me this gentle consolation. Don't refuse me. Respond to my tears and be saved! If you cannot act for your own good, at least act in answer to my prayers. Spare me the anguish of seeing you condemned to everlasting torment!

SGANARELLE (Aside) Poor woman!

DONA ELVIRE I loved you with all my being, above all else in the world. For you I turned away from my duty. Everything I have done I did for you. In return, I ask you to remake your life and escape destruction. If these tears from a woman you have loved are not enough, I plead in the name of whatever can move you.

SGANARELLE (Aside, looking at Don Juan) Heart of a tiger!

DONA ELVIRE Now I am leaving. I have said what I came to say.

DON JUAN It's late, madame. Stay over. We will give you the best room we have.

DONA ELVIRE No, Don Juan. You must not detain me.

DON JUAN Madame, I assure you I'd be very pleased if you would stay.

DONA ELVIRE I repeat: no. Let us not waste time with useless talk. I'll go quickly. Don't find any pretext for showing me out. Only heed my advice. (Exit)

DON JUAN You know, I did feel something for her. Very interesting. New and bizarre. Her sloppy dress, her love-lorn air, and her tears started to bring the old, dead fires back to life.

SGANARELLE But what she said had no effect on you?

DON JUAN Supper! now!

SGANARELLE Very good.

DON JUAN (Sitting at the table) Still, Sganarelle, we must consider how to reform.

Don Juan

SGANARELLE That's it!

DON JUAN That is it! How to reform. Another twenty or thirty years of living this way, and then we'll consider what we should do.

SGANARELLE Oh!

DON JUAN What do you say to that?

SGANARELLE Not a thing. Here's supper.

Ragotin and La Violette bring in the dishes. From one of them Sganarelle takes a morsel and pops it in his mouth.

DON JUAN Your cheek looks swollen. What is it? Tell me, what have you got there?

SGANARELLE Not a thing.

DON JUAN Show me. Horrible—a lump on his cheek. Quick, a knife: we must lance it. The poor lad can't stand the pain, and the abscess could stifle him. See: it's ready to burst. Why, you rascal!

SGANARELLE No, master, I was just checking that the cook hadn't put in too much salt or pepper.

DON JUAN Sit down here. Let's eat. After supper I have a task for you. You look hungry.

SGANARELLE (Sitting at the table) I'll say. I haven't eaten since this morning, master. Taste this: it's first class. (As he starts to load his plate the servants remove it.) My plate, my plate! Take it easy, will you? Good grief, you're too quick, my young friend, with the clean plates. And you, La Violette, you little hustler, are you serving invisible wine?

While one servant fills Sganarelle's glass, the other servant takes away his plate again.

A thumping at the door.

DON JUAN Who knocked like that?
SGANARELLE  Who the hell is interrupting our meal?
DON JUAN  I want to dine in peace. Let nobody in.
SGANARELLE  Let me see who it is.

*He goes to the door and returns trembling.*

DON JUAN  What's wrong? Who is it?
SGANARELLE  The (He nods like the Statue) ... is there.
DON JUAN  Let me see. I'll show that nothing can shake me.
SGANARELLE  Poor Sganarelle, where can you hide?

*The Statue enters and sits at the table.*

DON JUAN  Quick, another chair and place setting. Sganarelle, sit down again.
SGANARELLE  Master, I'm not hungry now.
DON JUAN  Sit, I said. And drink — to the Commander's health. Fill Sganarelle's glass.
SGANARELLE  Master, I'm not thirsty.
DON JUAN  Drink, and let's have a song to entertain the Commander.
SGANARELLE  Master, I have a cold.
DON JUAN  That doesn't matter. Sing up! (Sganarelle croaks a few notes.) You others, bring instruments and accompany him.

THE STATUE  Don Juan, that will do. I return your invitation. Will you have supper with me tomorrow? Are you bold enough to come?
DON JUAN  Yes. I'll be there with only Sganarelle.
SGANARELLE  Many thanks, but tomorrow I have to fast.
ACT FIVE

A country setting. Don Louis, Don Juan, Sganarelle.

DON LOUIS My son, can God have bountifully answered my prayers? Is this true, what you say? You are not leading me on with false hopes? How can I believe in this sudden conversion?

DON JUAN (Hypocritically) Yes, as you will see, I have turned away from my errors. I forswear what I was last night. In a flash God brought about a change in me that will astound the world. He touched my soul and opened my eyes. I now look back with horror on my long blindness and my crimes. As I reflect on those unspeakable acts, I marvel that He bore them for so long without raining down dire punishments on my head. I have come to appreciate His mercy and restraint. I will now profit from them and do what I should. Let everyone witness this transformation, watch how I make up for the scandals in my past life, and try to deserve His full forgiveness. As I strive for that end, I ask you, father, to assist me in choosing a person to guide me along the path I must take.

DON LOUIS My son, it is easy to reawaken a father's love. His son's offenses evaporate at the first penitent word. I am already forgetting all the pains I have suffered on your account, thanks to what you have just said. I am so happy! — do you see these tears of joy? God has granted me what I prayed for; I ask for nothing more. Embrace me, my son, and let me urge you to follow through with this admirable effort. I must immediately share the wonderful news and my delight with your mother, and thank the good Lord for inspiring you to make these pious resolutions (Exit.)

SGANARELLE Master, I can't tell you how pleased I am to see you converted. I've been waiting so long for that, and now, thank God, my wishes have come true.

DON JUAN Oh, this imbecile!

SGANARELLE Which imbecile?

DON JUAN Do you take what I said at face value? Do you think you heard my heart when I opened my mouth?


DON JUAN No, I haven't changed at all. My old feelings remain intact.

SGANARELLE You're not a bit intimidated by that miracle of a statue that moves and speaks?

DON JUAN There is definitely something about it I don't understand. But whatever it is, it cannot influence the way I think or feel. I said I wanted to reform and lead a model life out of pure expediency, as a useful trick, a posture to win over my father, whom I may need, and also as a safeguard against the many misadventures in which people may entangle me. I'm confiding in you, Sganarelle, because I very much want one witness to my true beliefs and motives.

SGANARELLE So you still don't believe in anything, and yet you hope to present yourself as an honest man?

DON JUAN Why not? There's a multitude like me. They dabble in the same business and wear the same mask for their own advancement.

SGANARELLE (Aside) Oh what a man! What a man!

DON JUAN These days hypocrisy is nothing to be ashamed of. It's a fashionable vice, and vices pass for virtues after they come into fashion. The honest man is the finest role you can pick today, and so the professional hypocrite starts out with striking advantages. The art of imposture enjoys wide respect. Even people who recognize it for what it is don't dare speak up. All other vices can be openly condemned and attacked; but hypocrisy is a vice with privileges. It shoves its fist into the mouth of its critics. It thrives as unassailably as a monarch. It amounts to a tight society, a party or a religion made up of people who know one another's language or signs. If you attack one of them, all the others descend on you. There are, of course, men who are genuinely honest and devout. But they get taken in by the impostors and even join the ranks. There, in their pride and blindness, they prop up the very villains...
who are allying their honesty. I know many a man who has availed himself of the tactics of hypocrisy in order to cover up the damages of a misspent youth. He buckles the cloak of piety around him and, under that respected cloth, is immune — free to do as much evil as he can. It doesn't help to see through such people and know them for what they are. Society still accepts them for what they pretend to be. They bow their heads, let out mortified sighs, roll their eyes a couple of times, and lo, all is forgiven. I want to enter that shelter and be safe to carry on with my affairs. I do not plan to give up my pleasurable way of life, but I will take care to keep it hidden and quiet. If ever I am found out, I won't need to defend myself; I'll let the rest of the cabal rise up and take my part against anyone who criticizes me. You see, this is the best way to do what I want while I avoid punishment. I will appoint myself a censor of other people's actions, pronounce the rest of the world bad, and have a good opinion of... myself only. If any man upsets me, however slightly; I will never forgive him but will feed and water my grudge. I will become the spokesman for God's revenge, and with this convenient excuse, I will assault my enemies and accuse them of being irreligious. Against them I will launch those zealous busybodies who are willing to attack anyone in public with no excuse but the authority they have taken on themselves. This is how I will benefit from human weakness and draw up a sensible pact with the vices of our age.

**SGANARELLE** Good God! Now what are you saying? That you've added hypocrisy to your list of sins? That's all you needed to round you off — the worst, the most abominable crime. Master, for me this is the last straw. I'm bursting. I must speak. Do what you want to me, whip me, thrash me, kill me, if you must, but I'll get this out of my system, because as a loyal servant I owe it to you. Remember, master, the pitcher mashes when it goes to the well too many times; and as a author — I don't know which one — has said, man is like a bird clinging to a bough; the bough clings to the tree; and anyone who clings to the tree follows good precepts; good precepts are worth more than fine words; you hear fine words at the court; at the court you find courtiers; courtiers observe the fashions; fashions arise from our fantasies; our fantasies arise from the soul; the soul is the source of life; life ends with death; death makes us think of heaven; heaven is above the earth; the earth is not the sea; at sea there are storms; storms can wreck ships; a ship needs a good pilot; a good pilot has prudence; prudence is absent from the young; the young must obey the old; the old love wealth; wealth makes them rich; the rich are not poor; the poor suffer from poverty; against poverty there's no law; without law, men are wild beasts; and consequently, you're as damned as all the devils.

**DON JUAN** A powerful argument!

**SGANARELLE** If you don't act on it, all the worse for you.

*Enter Don Carlos.*

**DON CARLOS** Don Juan, it's lucky that I met you here, rather than in your home, to ask what you have decided. You heard me undertake to settle this matter. I'll be candid. I would prefer a friendly agreement. To bring that about I will be glad to see you confirm in public that my sister is your wife.

**DON JUAN** (Hypocritically) Oh dear! I wish with all my heart that I could meet your desires. But God will not have it so. He has inspired me to remake myself. I am now resolved to give up all worldly attachments; to shed all tokens of vanity as swiftly as possible; and to rectify the crimes of my fiery, heedless youth by leading a life of self-denial.

**DON CARLOS** That purpose, Don Juan, does not clash with my proposal. Taking a lawful wife is quite consistent with the admirable ideas inspired in you by our Lord.

**DON JUAN** I am afraid not. Your sister has come to the identical decision. She has made up her mind to go into seclusion. We were both moved at the same time by the same divine grace.

**DON CARLOS** That does not satisfy us. Her seclusion might seem to be the result of your contempt for her and for our family. Our honor requires that she live with you as your wife.

**DON JUAN** That, I assure you, is not possible. It happens to be what I wanted most. Only today I sought the Lord's advice; but after my supplications a voice told me I must put your sister out of my thoughts, for with her I could never find my salvation.

**DON CARLOS** Don Juan, do you think you can hoodwink us with these excuses?

**DON JUAN** I am obeying the voice from heaven.
DON CARLOS  Do you expect to fob me off with that sort of talk?
DON JUAN  God wills it.
DON CARLOS  You removed my sister from the convent only to forsake her?
DON JUAN  God commands it.
DON CARLOS  Are we to tolerate this slur on our family name?
DON JUAN  You must appeal to God.
DON CARLOS  What is this God and God and God?
DON JUAN  God requires it.
DON CARLOS  Enough, Don Juan, I understand you. This is not a suitable place for settling our dispute. But I will shortly find you again.
DON JUAN  As you wish. You are aware that I do not lack courage and know how to use my sword when necessary. I shall soon pass along the alley that leads to the main convent house. I assure you that I have no desire to fight. God has forbidden me. But if you begin the attack, we shall see what comes of it.
DON CARLOS  We shall. We certainly shall see. (Exit.)

SGANARELLE  Master, what's this new manner of yours? It's worse than your others. I'd even prefer you the way you were before. I was still hoping you could be saved; but now my hopes are dead, and I believe that God, Who has put up with you for so long, won't be able to stand this last atrocity.

DON JUAN  Come on, come on, God is not as strict as you think. If men were punished for every —

A Specter appears as a veiled woman.

SGANARELLE  Master, see! God has sent a warning.

DON JUAN  When God warns me, He'll have to speak more plainly if He wants me to hear.

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DON JUAN

THE SPECTER  Don Juan has almost no time left to profit from God's mercy. If he does not repent now he is lost.

SGANARELLE  You did hear that, master?

DON JUAN  Who dares speak those words? Do I recognize that voice?

SGANARELLE  No, master, it's a ghost. I can see by its walk.

DON JUAN  Ghost, spirit, or devil, I'll find out what it is.

The Specter changes shape, and becomes Time holding a scythe.

SGANARELLE  Oh God, did you see that, master, how it changed its shape?

DON JUAN  Nothing can frighten me. My sword will soon tell me if it's a body or a spirit.

The Specter vanishes before Don Juan can strike it.

SGANARELLE  Quick, master, give way before all this evidence. Repent fast!

DON JUAN  No. Whatever happens, it shall never be said that I could repent. Come.

The Statue enters.

THE STATUE  Don Juan! Wait! Yesterday you promised to join me for supper.

DON JUAN  Yes. Which way do we go?

THE STATUE  Give me your hand.

DON JUAN  Here.

THE STATUE  Don Juan, the hardened sinner earns a terrifying death, and spurning God's mercy invites the thunderbolt.

DON JUAN  Oh my God, what is this agony? The scorching of fires within — unbearable! My whole body is ablaze. Ahhh!
A crash of thunder and bolts of lightning fall on Don Juan. The ground opens and swallows him. Great flames leap from the place where he disappeared.

SGANARELLE But my pay! My pay! ... In the end his death delights them all: an offended Almighty, broken laws, violated girls, dishonored families, outraged parents, seduced wives, enraged husbands ... Everybody's satisfied. Except me. All those years of service, and my only remuneration is to watch my sinful master undergo the most gruesome punishment I can imagine ... My pay! My pay! My pay!

The end of

Don Juan

Postscript

Both plays in this book are set in Southern Italy, Scapin in Naples and Don Juan in an unspecified part of Sicily during the rule of Spain. Yet both plays are saturated in Frenchness. How, then, does one translate the names? Frank Dunlop found an ingenious answer with his Scapino. He Italianized the names and the title, took the characters and their lazi and burlt back to their commedia dell'arte origins, and came up with a British pantomime that poked fun at its own Italian pretensions. Other translators and adapters have variously kept the location or predominant tone or cultural ambience in France (as in this version) or given it a British or American tilt. However one copes with these details, Scapin, a farce, follows a consistent line.

Don Juan does not. For a translator it is the most daunting of Molière’s prose plays, although his mightiest. I apologize to readers and performers for the jumble of Spanish titles (Don, Dofia), English titles (the Commander, the Statue, the Specter), and French versions of Spanish names (Elvire, Alonse), a compromise reached after long indecision. Perhaps that compromise can be justified by pointing out that the play itself is not only international in character but also a curious mixture. It blends the natural and the unnatural with the supernatural. It incorporates comedy, farce, tragedy, and melodrama; a few French peasants with their French names, Spanish-derived characters, not all of them borrowed from Tirso de Molina’s The Trickster of Seville; and Sganarelle, Molière’s own role, who is as much of an apparent anomaly here as Puck is in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The playwright may have intended to impose some consistency on these varied components by his choice of setting. Did he know that Sicily was the home of Epicharmus, the comic writer of antiquity, and, as some scholars believe, of the earliest Greek farcical mime performances called the phlyakes? If so, Molière was possibly implying that in the play, which carries no subtitle to define its genre, the comic and farcical elements should overpower the bitter and tragic ones. He seems to support this speculation by giving Sganarelle the lines that open and close the play, as well as the final words in the first, second, and third acts, and by keeping that earnest, two-faced duffer onstage for twenty-six
of the play's twenty-seven scenes, while Don Juan appears in twenty-five.

Whatever Molière knew or intended, Sicily was not Paris (much as Venice was not London for Shakespeare and Jonson). On that foreign soil he could plant home truths like the ones in Juan's Act Five speech about hypocrisy, frustrating his enemies and detractors by making them recognizable yet not quite identifiable.

The language of Elvire, Louis, Carlos, and Alonse, almost as formal and as elegantly graded in the thought progressions as Corneille's verse drames, contrasts with the Beauce dialect of Charlotte and Pierrat (the latter another refugee from the comedia). But Charlotte assumes a milder dialect during her colloquies with Juan as she tries to speak more "nicely." Juan in his turn shifts between the gallant precision of his peers and his father and a sarcastic bluntness in his scenes with Sganarelle. Sganarelle differs again.

He has a broadly comic personality and his arguments are either ridiculed by Juan or patently ridiculous, especially his long and muddily mercurial speech on conformity in Act 5; but although ill-educated he is no illiterate, and at times he has to convey an underlyng-seriousness in order to function as Juan's principal antagonists.

"The formal speeches give a translator the big headaches. They will not go into a stage English that releases the flow of narrative beauty of the French. Strict accuracy often results in lengthily cryptic digressions or even unintelligibility. I have frequently had to rephrase in order to escape from Molière's sentence structure, and am praying that his statue will not knock and invite me to supper."

To that master scholar, critic, playwright, and translator Eric Bentley I am unpayably indebted for his correspondence and our conversations. To Joyce, my wife, I am indebted for just about everything.

Albert Bermel