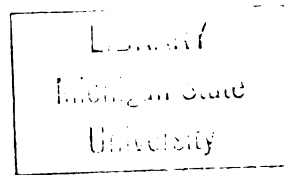


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TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

A MODERNIZED RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

By

Allan Richard Maar

A THESIS

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan
State University of Agriculture and Applied Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1957

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Roger M. Busfield, chairman of the thesis committee, for his guidance in the preparation of True Love and Spaghetti; and to the members of the committee, Dr. Lawrence Babb, Mr. Stuart C. Chenoweth, Mr. Cecil H. Nickle, and Mr. Frank B. Senger for their co-operation.

I also extend my deep appreciation to Miss Mina S. Goossen, Miss Betty Gallagher, Miss Nanette Lancaster, Miss Jane Keeler, Mr. Ralph Smith, and the many other kind and helpful instructors of my high school and undergraduate college days. Without their advice and infinite energy in my behalf this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Harry N. Maar, whose understanding and encouragement have provided a constant force behind not only this work, but my entire academic pursuit.

*

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI
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COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

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Allan Richard Maar

AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the College of Communication Arts of Michigan
State University of Agriculture and Applied Science
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the degree of

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Department of Speech

1957

Approved



Major Professor

ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to write a full-length play reminiscent of the late sixteenth century Italian Commedia Dell'Arte, that would be appealing and comprehensible to a contemporary audience. The play, furthermore, would demonstrate the author's understanding of standard playwriting techniques as they could be applied to a theatrical form which originally was not highly organized. This thesis is a presentation of the completed manuscript of the play, True Love and Spaghetti, as it would be presented to a director for production, without music but including introductory material helpful in achieving the desired interpretation.

Plot synopsis: In a small Italian coastal village of about 1590 live the sweet, young Flaminia and her maid-servant, Argentina. It is early summer and both girls are in love--the former with the dashing Mario; the latter with his bashful manservant, Virginio.

Likewise, Flaminia's miserly father, the innkeeper, Pantalone; and Mario's pedantic father, the quack, Dr. Gratiano, both widowers, are also in love, vying for the hand of beautiful, wealthy, retired courtesan, Isabella.

Complications arise, however, when Flaminia is led

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to suspect that Mario has been unfaithful to her with the worldly Isabella. Argentina, moreover, is frustrated because she is not certain of Virginio's love.

To add to the confusion, the braggart warrior, Capitano Alanzo Spavento returns to his fiancée, Isabella, after an absence of seven years. During that time he, accompanied by his corpulent servant, Polichinelle, has been searching for his long-lost twin brother, Capitano Muriello Spavento. The twin has now been traced back to this very village from which Alanzo originally departed. Therefore, deciding that his quest is almost over, Alanzo proceeds to assert his claim on Isabella and marry her as soon as Muriello is found.

Isabella, finding Alanzo no longer desirable, has her own ideas concerning the choice of her husband.

Trying to further his own cause as well as his master's, Virginio becomes involved in Isabella's designs. Misunderstandings develop rapidly as a result of disguises and mistaken identity. Needless to say, Muriello has by this time appeared.

Of course, someone must take the blame for the general entanglements, and Virginio is elected. He is tried, convicted, and sentenced to expatriation. Under the strain of the trial, however, he confesses his love for Argentina who resolves to save him. Through trickery

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the stupid Polichinelle is persuaded to take Virginio's place in exile. Thus, Argentina and Virginio are free to marry.

Flaminia's worries are terminated when Isabella announces that she has only enlisted Mario's aid in a crisis resulting from an affliction of her pet kitten, and that the young man is above reproach. Consequently, Flaminia forgives Mario. Nothing now stands in the way of their wedding.

By this time Isabella, too, has selected her mate. To the chagrin of Pantalone, Gratiano, and Alanzo (who subsequently runs off to retrieve his servant) the chosen one is Muriello.

When thoughts of amour have almost vanished from the minds of the two fathers, new vistas of hope are opened when Isabella announces the impending visit of her two unmarried sisters.

Thus, everyone but the absent Alanzo is happy as the farce concludes with the Judge performing a triple wedding ceremony.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Commedia Dell'Arte.....	1
The Commedia Dell'Arte Reconstruction.....	9
Character Studies.....	20
THE RECONSTRUCTION, <u>TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI</u>	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	194
BIOGRAPHY.....	197

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INTRODUCTION

THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Definition

One of the most fascinating eras in theatrical history was that in which the Commedia dell'Arte rose to prominence as a dramatic form. The name Commedia dell'Arte, commonly translated, the Professional Comedy, or the Comedy of Improvisation, suggests its essential theatric quality. It was a professional craftsman's theatre in which each actor was so skillful that he could improvise his part with nothing more than an outline of the scenes in mind.

Once the story had been selected it was arranged into a plot and written down in the form of a scenario which was tacked up backstage. Consisting simply of a brief description of the sequence of events and occasionally bits of business, the scenario did not include the lines of the actors. Each actor had to rely primarily upon his own inventiveness, wit, and collection of tricks and buffoonery for the successful execution of his role. Thus, it is not difficult to see that one of the attractions of this theatre lay in its vital, spontaneous performances.

The plots of the Commedia plays were episodic and relied heavily, as has been mentioned, upon the special talents and personalities of the actors, rather than any "well-made" structure. The sequence of ideas (contrary to Aristotle's teachings) might have been arranged in any number of ways without at all damaging the effectiveness of the production.

What exactly did the plays deal with? According to John McDowell the treatment of subject matter might be semi-serious or tragic in tone; idyllic or in the nature of a pastoral; or purely comic.¹ Regardless of their interpretation the stories seem to have been carefully chosen and spanned the entire length and breadth of literature, mythology, and history.

Whatever the treatment of its subject matter the Commedia emerged a strong, vital form without any literary or artistic pretensions, enjoyed at a low level of entertainment. As Winifred Smith points out there was evidently

. . . not the least philosophical intention, not the slightest idea of mingling with its 'delightfulness' that ethical teaching which theorists of the academies insisted was the function of comedy; the whole thing [was] merely to amuse. There [was] no strain on the attention of the audience, no plot complications such as

¹John H. McDowell, "Some Pictural Aspects of Early Commedia dell'Arte Acting," Studies in Philology, XXXIX (January, 1942), 53.

in many plays of the period gave rise to long debates on the relative values of love and honor; all the merit of the spectacle [consisted] in its liveliness and in the skill with which all kinds of laughter-moving devices [were] used.²

Origin

Scholars have suggested that the earliest sources for this genus of theatre may be found in Greek Old Comedy, a form of entertainment derived from the phallic ritual and ceremonies of Dionysus, which existed, as far as it is possible to determine, from about 500-400 B. C.³ Still more marked similarities appear in the Atellan farce and the mime shows of ancient Rome. The Commedia dell'Arte, as such, however, did not seem to arise until after the Dark Ages had passed, and the Renaissance in Italy had begun. Since this comedy was unscripted, it would be dangerous to become dogmatic in presenting its ancestry. It is conjectured, however, that since it was flourishing early in the sixteenth century, it may well have arisen in the preceding one, and might possibly be linked with the fall of Byzantium.⁴ In any event, by the middle of the sixteenth

²Winifred Smith, The Commedia dell'Arte, (New York: The Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 109.

³Thelma Niklaus, Harlequin, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1956), p. 18.

⁴Ibid., 27.

century it had reached its most popular stage and was known throughout Italy.

Influence

The Commedia, originally exclusively Italian, having once taken root, began to grow and spread in every direction. Soon it was accepted by most of the western European countries. It was especially well received in France. As a matter of fact, Moliere learned from the Italian players and shared a theatre with them when he first entered Paris with his company.

Kathleen Lea, in her study of the Commedia, reproduces an interesting description of a performance presented as part of the festivities for the wedding of the Duke of Bavaria in the spring of 1568.⁵

Furthermore, it may be stated that the Commedia dell'Arte was the connecting link between Italian comedy and the flowering of Elizabethan culture.⁶ In general, then, it exerted a profound influence upon the dramatic life of every country in Europe.

⁵Kathleen M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), I, p. 5.

⁶John Howard Lawson, Theory and Technique of Playwriting, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1936), p. 14.

Audience

Although the audiences attending the Commedia performances were varied, including the nobility as well as the peasantry, by far the more familiar association is with the latter. In its broadest sense the Commedia dell'Arte was a theatre of the people in the public square.

Stock Characters

The Commedia companies included from ten to twelve actors, a number that remained the average for two centuries. Companies were formed, and each actor was assigned to a specific stock role which he played as long as he was suitable (sometimes until retirement or death).

The stock character might be defined in broad terms of personality. He has been used repeatedly in many plays by authors of all periods of dramatic history. Through repetition in play after play his characteristics became fixed and he was readily recognized by audiences. Usually each character had at least one trait peculiar to himself which distinguished him from the other characters. This was his most important attribute. For example, one might consider Pantalone's avarice, Gratiano's bogus pedantry and pomposity, Polichinelle's stupidity and hunger, Virgilio's wiliness. While the traits of a character were some-

times changed and often assimilated into another character, a single trait always seemed to predominate. So, an actor in the mid-sixteenth century had only to perfect one type and had the added advantage of working with the same small group of actors for a long enough time so he might become very skillful.

The stock type, moreover, served a valuable dramatic function in that upon his entrance his purpose in the play was known immediately. It is interesting to interject, however, that while these characters retained their basic traits and functions, as the years passed, they also gained the individual attributes of the actors portraying them. As a character evolved he might still be avaricious, but there are many ways of portraying greed.

Masks

The stock characters fall roughly into two categories; those who wore masks, and those who did not. Generally, the male lovers and all the women remained unmasked, while all others wore them. Masks helped the audience to identify each character immediately upon his entrance, thus enabling it to keep the strands of the involved plots untangled. Also, masks served as a source of humor as well as added a conventional quality which gave unity and continuity to the character along with his dress and gesticulation.

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Furthermore, it seems likely that the mask was valuable for political reasons. To the Commedia actors nothing was sacred, and as Thelma Niklaus states,

A man in a mask was anonymous, and since he was not himself, had no obligation to respect the limitations of his own character.⁷

Thus, an actor could conceal his identity and make rather caustic observations and topical allusions to the prominent members and shortcomings of his society without fatal consequences.

Comic Devices

Apart from the general comic aspects of the scenario, there were several comic devices used by the actors to evoke laughter from the spectators. Perhaps the most important were the memorized speeches, the lazzi, and the burle.

According to Winifred Smith the improvisation of the Commedia dell'Arte actor was never more than partial.

Each player possessed a book which he filled with compositions either original or borrowed, suitable to his role.⁸

Thus, such things as sententious remarks, figures of speech, love discourses, rebukes, speeches of desperation, and ravings were committed to memory and used whenever needed as a source of amusement.

⁷Niklaus, op. cit., p. 36.

⁸Smith, op. cit., p. 4.

The lazzi, which Allardyce Nicoll points out were "simply scenes of action independent of the episodes outlined in the scenario,"⁹ seem to have been inserted just for the sake of provoking laughter. Most of the verbal lazzi were rather crude, and those of action slapstick, rough and tumble, and frequently vulgar by modern standards.

A simpler comic device than the lazzo was the burle or practical joke which would correspond to the contemporary gag. It was usually a single piece of business inserted to end the act, prolong the main action, or delay the denouement.¹⁰ Whereas the lazzo would seek to summon a number of laughs reinforcing each other for an ultimate cumulative effect, the burle aimed to excite but one laugh. Thus, a single lazzo might contain a number of burle.

⁹Allardyce Nicoll, Masks Mimes and Miracles, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), p. 219.

¹⁰Lea, op. cit., p. 186.

THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE RECONSTRUCTION

The Commedia dell'Arte flourished in Italy during the sixteenth century, but this type of theatre is cosmopolitan, and by its very nature it is restricted to no one age or people. Its robust, spirited humor, and stock characters are universal and may still be appreciated on the stage of today.

The spirit and charm of the Commedia depended upon the improvised moment, the exigencies of each new performance, the flavor of each new audience, and the timely allusions. Thus, it necessarily depended for its style and artistry upon the type of actor engaged in it. If it had not been for certain men like Angelo Beolco who gathered superior actors together into companies and developed the theatre to a high degree of perfection, actors of little wit, less culture, and poor technique who had previously "dragged it down to the lowest levels of threadbare entertainment,"¹¹ might have killed it off altogether.

The professional companies that were formed, however, had an opportunity to work together for long periods and perfect their ensemble as well as individual techniques.

¹¹Niklaus, op. cit., p. 28.

Today, actors are usually chosen for single productions after which they go their separate ways. But simply because the theatrical organization of two periods differs, it is, indeed, unfortunate to lose that type of theatre that so pleased and excited the audiences of another era. Therefore, without extremely talented actors at whose disposal is an unlimited amount of time, it is highly improbable that a reasonable facsimile of the Commedia could be created. With a script, however, the improbable becomes possible, for in a comparatively short period the actors could produce a performance that would be historical, yet modern in appeal.

Problems

If a script, then, is to be written, as far as possible, in the spirit and manner of the Commedia, certain questions inevitably arise. First, how is it possible, if there were no scripts of the original plays, to reconstruct one now? Second, how is it possible, if the attraction of the original lay in its spontaneous improvised characteristic, to make a scripted version as vital and full of life as the original?

In answering the first question, several facts stated in the preceding section may be reviewed, as well as a few not previously cited. First of all, many of the

outlines of plots or scenari used are extant; also many of the stock speeches have been preserved. In the third place, descriptions of lazzi and burle, as well as observations of actual performances have been recorded for posterity; and finally, a number of pictorial illustrations of Commedia performances showing the characters in action are in existence. Thus, it is certainly not impossible by selecting and fitting pieces together to get an accurate idea of this form of theatre, and to reconstruct a script recapturing the spirit of this comedy.

The question of how to make a scripted version of the Commedia as vital and full of life as the original is more difficult to answer, and yet, it, likewise, is not impossible. If a script is used, the responsibility for creating the impression of improvisation falls heavily upon the actor. The injection of life and vitality into the pre-written line is absolutely essential. Of course, there are certain things the playwright can do to aid the actor. The inclusion of direct address to the audience is one of these elements. If this is skillfully handled, a spontaneous effect may be produced. The insertion of the script of many suggestions for business would also be a boon to the actor. On the other hand, the omission of business, in some cases, is also helpful, for it affords

the actor an opportunity to create his own, and in this way add his own individuality to the script.

Process

If it is concluded that the development of a Com-media script is possible and if properly presented could capture the spirit of the original, the question of material selection arises. Should such a script be an accurate historical recreation or a completely modern analogy, or a merger of the two?

After careful consideration the possibility of an accurate historical recreation was dismissed, for the plot would have to remain disjointed and episodic. While the audiences of another era might have been entertained by this, the modern audience seems to desire a stronger, more unified plot. Furthermore, there is a great difference between the social and cultural orientation of the two periods. Moreover, many topical allusions of the sixteenth century would have no meaning for a contemporary audience and hence not be appropriate. There is also the matter of the earthy humor employed in the original. It is difficult to believe that even the most liberal minded person of today would not be slightly surprised at some of the (according to present standards) vulgar but common bits of business used, while the more squeamish spectator would be shocked, scandalized,

and deeply offended. If this should occur the spirit of that vanished day would not be recaptured, but violated.

On the other hand, a completely modern analogy to the sixteenth century Commedia might be applied. This would be an attempt to translate into entirely modern terms, which would be meaningful to a contemporary audience, a theatrical production experienced by an audience of another era. The disadvantage of this approach seems to lie in the fact that the playwright could not help but fail to reproduce any of the original detail of his source and the savor of the original would be lost.

After consideration of both methods of reconstruction cited above, the following procedure was employed. A general study of the theories and techniques of playwriting was undertaken. After an intensive survey of the Commedia, a selection of ideas, standard speeches, situations, lazzi, and burle that were historically accurate, yet not outdated, was made. Many of the initially selected ideas had to be discarded for one reason or another as the project progressed. After many scenari were digested it seemed evident that a single scenario could not combine the most typical characteristics of the Commedia dell'Arte. Furthermore, most of the scenari were so disjointed, that not only would a contemporary audience be dissatisfied, but would no

doubt find it difficult to keep character relationships untangled. Therefore, antiquated ideas and modern concepts were combined. Using the more typical elements found in a collection of scenari, a new one was developed utilizing eleven stock characters (and a cat) and a strengthened, more highly integrated story line. The type of development decided upon was the purely comic, rather than tragic or pastoral.

After further selection of materials, rearrangement, assimilation, and translation into modern analogies, a detailed scenario was finally devised.

Music

It was decided that since the use of music and song seemed to play an important part in the original plays, this element would be emphasized. Thus, lyrics were composed for most of the characters. In addition to their function of adding historical authenticity, the lyrics have several other purposes. Not only do they advance the development of the plot and character, they also provide a necessary relief from exposition and in several instances from physical activity of the actors. The business accompanying several of the songs should be extremely vital, while that used with others must be more gentle, but in all cases it should bring a smile to the face of the spectator.

Such songs as "A Tiny Pinch of Coquetry" presented by Isabella in act one and the "Bragging Song" sung by Alanzo in the second act are direct restatements in verse of set speeches delivered by comparable characters of the period.

Stage Business

Considering the modern audience, much of the bawdy humor prevalent in the original period of the Commedia was omitted. There is opportunity in several scenes, however, to include suggestive business, more or less, depending upon the broad-mindedness of the specific audience for which it is being presented. The scene in which Pantalone proposes to Gratiano who is disguised as Isabella is a case in point.

The modern producer must keep in mind that the appeal of the Commedia is primarily visual, employing universal gestures and pantomime. It is a comedy of broad sweeps; it is of necessity blatant, using exaggerated and grotesque poses and movements. Within the structure of the script the director may wish to include such physical activities (when they are appropriate) as cartwheels, somersaults, hand walking, rope-swinging, jumps, falls, dances, bellycrawls, duels, struttings, juggleries, swaggers, and chases, to mention only a few. Since this is a presentational type of theatre, intercourse with the audi-

ence from the stage as well as from the floor of the auditorium on which they are situated should not be overlooked. Another aid to business with never ending possibilities is the use of properties. From property lists of the period, along with observation of paintings of the comedians in action, it may be noted that, along with the properties specifically listed in the script, many others were used. Among them were stilts, mops, strings of sausages, kettles, dishes, clubs, slippers, swords, spears, ladders, signs, trunks, lutes, wine bottles, knives, lanterns, letters, rings, chains, and of course, all items of wearing apparel, such as hats, capes, handkerchieves, etc.

Costume

In considering a play of this era for production before a contemporary audience, several additional factors must be taken into account. First, is the problem of costume. If the true spirit of the original is to be retained, the traditional costumes must be employed. Not only are they extremely colorful, but they provide an excellent source of business. Historical accuracy is admirable, nevertheless, modification may be desirable. In the case of the mask, if considered part of costume, complete omission may be necessary. As Carlo Goldoni comments on the subject of masks,

The mask must always be very prejudicial to the action of the performer either in joy or sorrow; whether he be in love, cross, or good-humored, the same features are always exhibited; and however he may gesticulate and vary the tone, he can never convey by the countenance, which is the interpreter of the heart, the different passions with which he is inwardly agitated.

The masks of the Greeks and Romans were of a sort of speaking trumpets, invented for the purpose of conveying the sound through the vast extent of their amphitheaters. Passion and sentiment were not, in those times, carried to the pitch of delicacy which is now necessary. The actor must, in our day [1787], possess a soul; and the soul under a mask is like a fire under ashes.¹²

In a modern reconstruction of the Commedia there are still other reasons for not using masks. Today there is no reason for an actor to conceal his identity for political reasons. In a script with a strong story line, the characters are established by their personalities and costumes, leaving the mask unnecessary as a means of identification. It is no longer a stage convention; and finally the omission of the mask, giving the flexible face of the actor freedom of expression, would seem to be more beneficial to the total production than the difficulties that would be caused by its use. This is not to say, however, that some suggestion of the original aspect of each character could not be devised with modern make-up.

¹²Carlo Goldoni, "Memoirs," European Theories of the Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), p. 249.

Dialects

Another important factor that was an integral part of the original Commedia performances was the exploitation of dialects in the speech of the characters. One of the foremost sources of comedy was in the contrast of dialects --Pantalone was a Venetian; the Doctor was a Bolgonese, etc. In presenting a modern equivalent there are a number of things a director might do. He might employ standard foreign dialects as they suited the characters, i. e., Scotch, British, Irish, Cockney, French, etc. Then, too, he might use typical American dialects such as those of the Southerner, the Texan (cowboy), the Brooklynite, the Hillbilly, the Italian-American, etc. Then, again, the director might derive his humor from other sources and leave the problem of dialects alone. At least he should be aware of their possibilities.

Setting

True Commedia could be presented on any stage or on no stage at all. Traditionally, however, there was, as in Roman times, the representation of a street which ran parallel with the front of the stage. Along the street loomed the facades of three houses, the doors of which were frequently used. For the operation of this play three such

houses are required. They might be as simple or elaborate as the director deemed necessary and the budget allowed. Possibly just platforms of varying heights would suffice, if the lighting facilities were adequate. Perhaps drops could be utilized to shield one location while another was in use, or the actors themselves might move screens representing walls. At any rate, the scenery should be simple to operate and not get in the way of the actors. They must have as much room for movement as possible, for then as now, the success of the Commedia depends upon its actors.

CHARACTER STUDIES

Virginio appears young and handsome in a boyish way. His affable personality is a joy to behold. Some might describe him as a rascal; others as a dunce. Really, he is neither. If his tricks make other characters uncomfortable, it is not because he is consciously trying to harm them, but because he is rather short sighted and very human. If at times he feigns slowness of wit, there is method in it. A loyal and obedient servant to his master, Mario, he gets along well with most people--most people, except women, that is. When it comes to the opposite sex, and one member in particular, Argentina, he is shy and often terrified. Whenever he is in her presence he freezes. Lovesick, and unable to do a thing about it, he finds himself with a real problem. Thus, spring his main goals in life; to overcome his awe of Argentina, to muster enough courage to propose, and to raise sufficient money for a successful marriage. If he could only find a way to do this, he would be his true self--full of life, vitality, and the very devil! Sometimes, however, he forgets his problems for a moment and does things just to draw attention to himself and cause laughter. It is then that he uses his flexible body and voice (he can turn a cartwheel as easily as he can sing a song) to full advantage. But, inevitably, his problems return and his mind goes to work searching for a solution.

Flaminia is a young girl--pure, innocent, virginal, and sweet. As her name implies, she can become a flame, a fire of passion, in love and anger. Her true love is Mario, but when she doubts his fidelity she becomes so overwrought that it is feared she will die of a broken heart. In spite of the fact that she is Argentina's social superior, she often appears less sensible. Her love for the domestic and the homely is appealing, however, it seems unfortunate for her, but not the audience, that she takes herself so seriously.

Argentina is the perky servant of Flaminia. Rather short and plump, she has a dynamic personality that compliments that of her mistress. While she respects and gets on very well with Flaminia, she is headstrong and has her own ideas, which often conflict with those of Pantalone, Flaminia's

father. Determined that she will ensnare Virginio, whom she deeply loves, she employs every strategy that her nimble mind can devise. Frequently she is rather gauche in her remarks, but always she manages to keep out of really "hot water". Among her delightful characteristics are a sprightly giggle, a charming pout, and a grace of movement.

Pantalone is the venerable father of Flaminia, and the keeper of the famous Pantalone's Inn. Although he is, indeed, a decrepit old man, he wishes to pose as a youth. Tall, thin, and wearing his usual red and black garb, he presents a rather ridiculous picture of a man ripe in years who ought to be the essence of dignity, authority, and moral behavior, but who is seized by love and acts like a child. Perched upon his large, hooked nose is a pair of spectacles which are not a great deal of help when one considers that his eyesight is almost nonexistent. In his hand he wields a cane with which he frequently expresses himself. Probably he has more money than he shall ever use, but this does not stop him from seeking more. While his avarice is his chief motivation, lechery follows not far behind.

Isabella is a woman swiftly approaching middle age, but some might describe her as young, for she is remarkably well preserved. An artist with make-up, she conceals any lines that appear on her delicate countenance. Once a courtesan, one of the best, she is now retired, having in some way or another become very wealthy. She lives alone, except for an occasional visitor or two, with her collection of motherless kittens. Because she has no one but these kittens to care for, she is anxious to find a mate. For seven years she has been engaged to Capitano Alanzo Spavento who has gone on a voyage in search of his long, lost, twin brother. She has not heard from him since his departure, and has no idea when he will return. In his absence she does the best she can. Pantalone and Gratiano are both vying for her hand, and no wonder. She is an impressive figure to behold. Always impeccably clad, she fills every inch of her elegant dresses. She is exceedingly well developed in the upper regions (her mind). Then, too, her hips must not be overlooked--as if anyone could overlook her hips! They are one of the most expressive features in her communication of ideas. Somehow she often conveys different ideas to women from those she suggests to men. Perhaps this dichotomy springs from a divergent attitude when dealing with the two sexes. When she is with men she is a lovable, southern Italian "belle."

She is sweetness and light; but when amongst "fellow" females she definitely assumes some of the feline characteristics of her catty household companions. She is a determined woman, and once she has made up her mind, there is no changing it. It takes a great while for her to realize her shortcomings, but when she does, she, as well as the plot, is much the better for it.

Dr. Gratiano is rather short considering his girth. To call him plump would be an understatement, but he is slim in comparison with Polichinelle. At any rate, his substance adds a certain portliness to his mien. Traditionally dressed in black and white, with ruff and handkerchief always in place, he inspires confidence in the uninitiated patient, but those who know better steer clear of his medical practices. To put it bluntly, he is a quack of the first order, and has probably sent more patients on long journeys above or below than he has kept on earth. It is, moreover, suspected that he dabbles in alchemy and the occult sciences. While he, no doubt, might be considered avaricious, he is much more subtle in his quest for money than Pantalone, for example. He, like Pantalone, is after Isabella, and is determined to win her. In addition to this desire, he is anxious for his son, Mario, to follow in his footsteps as a medical man--though it is doubtful whether anyone, son or not, could babble and spout sententiousness of so little worth as the pedantic Dr. Gratiano.

Mario is a fine figure of a young man with handsome face, attractive physique, agreeable voice, and the elegant manners of a gentleman of the great world. In spite of these attributes he seems to have the singular capacity for being misunderstood, primarily because he is always in the wrong spot at the right time. He is daring, and, indeed, often amusing, for his plots designed to extricate himself and prove his innocence, thwarted and misinterpreted at every turn, cannot help but appear somewhat ludicrous. He is the true and faithful love of Flaminia, however, appearances are deceiving and at times she finds this rather difficult to believe.

Polichinelle is the extremely corpulent servant of Capitano Alanzo Spavento. His major joy in life is food. If it were not for his insatiable appetite he would probably remain in one place forever, but he is always driven onward in his quest for food. Thus, when it comes to taking care of his personal needs, he is most efficient, but in considering anything else he is the epitome of stupidity.

Extremely vain, thinking a good deal of himself and his ability, he is always on the lookout for a way of improving his situation. The only one who matters is he! To him the Capitano is merely a meal ticket and nothing more.

Capitano Alanzo Spavento is the most verbally egotistical, self-centered, braggart that ever strutted and swaggered upon "this stage called earth." He feels that he is a superior being, that women are dying for love of him, and that all men admire his courage and fear his wrath. It is no wonder that Polichinelle has become what he is with this person for a teacher. According to the Capitano he is greater than all mortals and most gods. His bravery cannot be matched, or so he boasts, but when tested it is obvious that he is terrified rather than a terror, and full of fear rather than ferocity.

Prithwish is simply an obedient kitten with a bandaged paw.

Capitano Muriello Spavento is the kind and considerate twin brother of Capitano Alanzo Spavento. Apart from a similarity in physical appearance, the two men are as different as black and white. Every objectionable trait of Alanzo is compensated for by an amenity in Muriello. He is suave, smooth, sophisticated, and mature. A seafaring man, his first and only love is the open water--until he meets Isabella, that is.

The Judge is a confused individual. He is small in body and in mind. A nervous person, he is flustered with little provocation, and his absentmindedness does not help this situation. The fact that he is married is apparent. He is so hen-pecked that it is a wonder he can manage without his wife in the courtroom. Trying for all he is worth to be the decisive, dignified man of business, the illusion is somehow always destroyed as soon as he opens his mouth and begins to stutter. Projecting from his nose is a pair of enormous spectacles, through which he sees everything, but usually understands very little. Under his arm is a well-worn portfolio from which he extracts many things that are not of a judicial nature. A large quill pen is tucked behind his ear, where it is constantly forgotten. Frankly it is a wonder he has risen to such a high governmental position, for stripped of his title he seems no more than a doddering, wizened, little, old man.

THE RECONSTRUCTION

Entitled

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

Being

A Musical Farce

(In Three Acts)

Reminiscent

of

The Late Sixteenth Century

Commedia dell'Arte

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Virginio--manservant to Mario, enamored of Argentina
Flaminia--daughter of Pantalone
Argentina--her maidservant
Pantalone--inkeeper, father of Flaminia
Isabella--wealthy, young, retired courtesan
Doctor Gratiano--a quack
Mario--his son, enamored of Flaminia
Polichinelle--manservant of Capitano Alanzo Spavento
Capitano Alanzo Spavento--a braggart warrior
Prithwish--a kitten of Isabella
Capitano Muriello Spavento--twin brother of Alanzo
Judge--a public servant

SCENES

- ACT I: Morning of a summer day about 1590, before Pantalone's Inn in a small Italian coastal town.
- ACT II: Scene 1 - The street before Isabella's home; before Pantalone's Inn; and inside Doctor Gratiano's home, a short while later.
- Scene 2 - Flaminia's boudoir, a few minutes later.
- Scene 3 - The street before Isabella's home; inside her home; and before Doctor Gratiano's home, the same time as Scene 2.
- ACT III: In the street before the three houses, a short while later.

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT I

PROLOGUE

The curtains are closed. VIRGINIO enters.
A musical instrument is slung over his
shoulder, and he strums it intermittently,
as he speaks and sings.

VIRGINIO

Hellooooo.

(He bows.)

My name's Virginio.

I'm in this play you've come to see.

Virginio, that's me.

Virginio, Virginio, Virginio, that's me!

But enough of introductions;
I've had direct instructions
To pose to you a question
Concerning your digestion.

Tonight you ate your dinner,
More or less, if stout or thinner
You are aiming to become.
Recollect if you are able
The fare upon the table.
Was it treats, ah--like--ah--pizza, or plain pabulum?

(Pointing to audience.)

There's a lady in the center--
If her mind she'll let me enter--
Who is thinking of her meal.
If the signal's not fallacious
With an appetite voracious,
She consumed great mounds of steaming hot spaghetti.

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Before that tempting dish was cooked
 I'll wager this is how it looked,
 Hand fashioned and cut fine with a machete.
 (From one pocket he extracts a large bundle
 of long uncooked spaghetti with which he
 gestures. From the other he pulls a wooden
 machete and demonstrates the cutting pro-
 cess.)

Now--here a parallel I draw
 Between our lives and this stuff, raw.
 At first they both are straight, untangled,
 But when they contact other strands,
 With heat and pressure--one expands--
 And soon they're all completely mangled!

So--human hopes, and joys, and fears,
 Are merged with laughter,
 (He laughs.)

And with tears--
 (He sighs, cries, and wipes his eyes with a
 sponge. As he squeezes the sponge a torrent
 of water pours forth.)

But that's the story of the play.
 So, let's proceed. Without delay
 I'll have the curtains parted. So--
 (He gestures and the curtains open.)
 The time has come, away we go!
 (He enters the stage proper.)

Three houses on the stage--off there's the sea.
 Here's number one, number two, and this one's number three.
 (As he gestures toward each house the lights
 on that particular area come on.)

The first: my master, Mario; and I;
 With his father, occupy.

The middle place where every fella
 Likes to go to be consoled,
 Is the home of Isabella--
 A friend to men--or so I'm told.

And here, an inn of the first water
 Run by aging Pantalone and his sweet and lovely daughter.
 (Flaminia enters carrying her sewing basket
 and a voluminous wedding gown. She is hum-
 ming the melody of "A Gown That Is Lovely."
 After arranging herself on the bench before
 the inn she begins to sew.)

Ah, here she is, Flaminia,
Frail as a rose, or a--a--a--zinnia.
There she sits quietly, hours after hours,
Embroidering on her wedding gown, flowers.

And with her, my sweetheart, my Pallas Athena,
The maiden I love, whose name's Argentina.
I love her it's true,
Still problems arise.
I'm helpless whenever I look in her eyes!

But enough of my rambling,
I've got to be ambling
Back home to my master. You see--
I've errands to run.
The plot's just begun.
There's so much in store yet,
So please do not forget

Virginio, Virginio, Virginio, that's me!
(He exits.)

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT I

As has been indicated by VIRGINIO in the prologue, the audience is asked to use imagination in visualizing the setting. Steps and platforms of varying levels may be used to show the distinctions between individual dwellings. Moreover, only the specific playing areas in use should be fully illuminated. Stage left is the GRATIANO residence, center stage is the home of ISABELLA, and stage right is PANTALONE'S Inn. All three dwellings face a central court yard. The properties in use are simple and unornamented. Among them are FLAMINIA'S bench, a large wash stand upon which is a wash basin, and two clothes poles.

FLAMINIA seated on her bench continues to sew and hum. ARGENTINA, busy with her morning chores, enters with her arms filled with laundry which she dumps by the washstand. Hovering over the mound of clothing, she selects a few choice items, places them delicately in the wash basin, and begins to scrub violently. FLAMINIA continues her stitching, looks toward stage left and sighs. ARGENTINA, looking in the same direction toward the GRATIANO residence, grunts. FLAMINIA looks at her disdainfully and laughs.

ARGENTINA

(Angrily)

Well, what's so funny?

FLAMINIA

You. Dear Argentina. If you always look so sullen and disgusted, really, I can't blame Virginio for avoiding you.

ARGENTINA

Humph! Who cares if Virginio avoids me?

(FLAMINIA smiles wryly at her.)

Well I certainly don't care. I mean, I don't know where you get the idea that I care for Virginio. How silly.

(She giggles.)

Who'd want him for a lover? Just because he's the handsomest,

(Sigh)

cleverest,

(Sigh)

most wonderful manservant in all Italy, don't think that he interests me.

(To audience)

That's the funniest thing I've ever heard.

(She giggles again.)

She thinks I'm interested in Virginio. I can get along without him.

(To FLAMINIA)

I don't know that I'd be interested even if he did want me.

FLAMINIA

(Chuckling)

Oh, come now Argentina. I'm not blind to all those little tricks of yours.

ARGENTINA

(Innocently)

What little tricks?

FLAMINIA

Don't be so innocent. I've noticed how you coyly lift your skirt, and give your ankle just a little wiggle hoping it'll catch his eye.

ARGENTINA

Why I never have.

FLAMINIA

I've seen you flutter to fix your apron and your dress, and see that every lock of hair is patted into place whenever there's the slightest chance he might appear.

ARGENTINA

It isn't so!

FLAMINIA

And, I've seen you sigh longingly whenever he approaches.

ARGENTINA

(Speechless)

Why--why...

FLAMINIA

(Teasingly)

Your eyelids twitter, twitter, twitter; your hands tremble; your lips get moist and quiver, quiver, quiver.

ARGENTINA

(Beginning to cry)

I don't know how you can say such a thing.

FLAMINIA

Well, you can't deny that your cheeks get all hot and rosy when he's near.

ARGENTINA

(Angered and crying)

It isn't true.

FLAMINIA

No?

ARGENTINA

(Emphatically)

No.

FLAMINIA

No?

ARGENTINA

(More emphatically)

No!

FLAMINIA

(Baiting the trap)

Oh, look. Here comes Virginio.

ARGENTINA

(Confused, smooths, pats, and flutters. Finally she turns in the direction where VIRGINIO is supposed to be.)

Where, where?

FLAMINIA

(With the triumphant smile of a victor on her face.)

No?

ARGENTINA

(Realizing she has been tricked and found out, she replies meekly.)

No. Well not all of it! I guess what my dear old mother used to say was true. She used to say:

(To audience)

"Love is like an itch, you can't conceal it."

FLAMINIA

(Amused)

Oh.

ARGENTINA

(To FLAMINIA)

Anyway, I only did what I saw you do.

FLAMINIA

Me? Why Argentina! What a thing to say.

ARGENTINA

It's true. I know it's not considered proper for a lowly servant girl to imitate her mistress, but when I saw how your tricks seemed to work, I thought--well I'll just try them too. I fluttered and I wiggled and I winked just like you!

(She sings and illustrates her actions as she goes.)

Whenever I see that certain man
I take a carefree stance.
Or as I sit, I languish a bit
In hope that he'll advance.

But never does he cast his eye
Askance in my direction.
He'll take a step and then pass up
A chance to show me some affection.

FLAMINIA

Complete rejection?

ARGENTINA

Before inspection!

(She sings.)

Whenever I see that certain man
I hope he'll notice me.
I wiggle and whirl, flutter and twirl.
He looks but doesn't see.

Perhaps he's bashful, or can't face
 A girl without abjection.
 In any case his malady
 Will be assured of quick detection

FLAMINIA

Perhaps infection!

ARGENTINA

I'll find correction.
 (She sings.)
 I'll not give up! I'll find the key!
 You'll see me break his trance.
 The time will come for victory
 When he and I will find romance!

FLAMINIA

He needs protection.

ARGENTINA

He'll get confection in complexion, and perfection in
 selection of me.

FLAMINIA

Of you?

ARGENTINA

Of me!

FLAMINIA

(No longer singing)
 Poor fellow, he's all but caught.

ARGENTINA

If he only were. The way Mario looks at you, one would
 think he was certain to propose any minute--but then my
 mother always used to say, "Never count your proposals until
 the ring is on your finger."

FLAMINIA

Ah, but Argentina, is there any doubt that he's mine and
 I'm his?

(She sighs.)

Ah, my Mario, the handsomest,

(Sigh)

cleverest, most wonderful master in all Italy.

ARGENTINA

(Scrubbing)

Why couldn't the servant be more like the master?

FLAMINIA

Mario is the master and, therefore, superior in love as well as anything else.

ARGENTINA

He may be superior in anything else,
 (She giggles devilishly.)
 but when it comes to love, a man is a man,
 (She hesitates.)
 or so my mother used to say, and Virginio is equal to any man in that.

FLAMINIA

(Simply stating a fact)
 From the looks of things you'll never have the opportunity to find out.

ARGENTINA

Is that so? Is that so? Well if I were you--if I were you, I'd be suspicious of a prize so easily won.

FLAMINIA

Meaning what?

ARGENTINA

Meaning Mario.

FLAMINIA

I trust Mario to the ends of Italy.
 (To audience)
 After all, I am his one and his only love.

ARGENTINA

I wouldn't trust a man to the ends of my finger nails, and I'd keep my eyes open, especially when he has yet to propose.

FLAMINIA

And just what is that supposed to mean?

ARGENTINA

Oh nothing, except with a woman like Isabella living next door--well--but then, I suppose there's really nothing between them.

FLAMINIA

Between them? How ridiculous! Of course there isn't.
 (To audience)
 Everybody knows that Isabella's engaged to Capitano Alanzo Spavento, and she is true to him.

ARGENTINA

After seven years?

FLAMINIA

(To ARGENTINA)

Has it been seven years?

ARGENTINA

Yes.

FLAMINIA

My, how time does fly.

ARGENTINA

Seven years, going on eight, and Isabella isn't going to wait much longer.

FLAMINIA

Well, I suppose not.

ARGENTINA

If you ask me--which you didn't, I know--if you ask me, I'd say her loyalty to him was just a scheme to keep every available man on the string.

FLAMINIA

Do you think so?

ARGENTINA

Of course. Why look at the way she has your father wrapped around her little finger.

FLAMINIA

It's alarming

ARGENTINA

It's disgusting. You wouldn't think that Mr. Pantalone would be taken in by her "poor, helpless, little, old me" routine. The way she takes on: "I'm just all alone in that big house with not a living soul to take care of but my poor, motherless, little kittens. I just get so lonesome for someone to care for, and look after."

FLAMINIA

Yes, I guess you're right. Whenever she wants anything, she gets it.

ARGENTINA

Especially from your father! And you get nothing! The old skinflint.

(To audience)

Everytime I think of it I just get hot all over.

(To FLAMINIA)

Why he's so tight that when he goes to bed, he stuffs the hole in the neck of the bellows to prevent them from losing any air during the night. And do you know what a friend of a friend of a very dear friend of mine told me?

FLAMINIA

No, what?

ARGENTINA

Well, she works for a barber, and she said that when Mr. Pantalone comes in to have his hair cut, he insists that all the clippings be picked up and put into a bag for him to take home, so that nothing will be wasted.

FLAMINIA

Oh, come now Argentina--I know he's not generous, but...

ARGENTINA

Generous!

(She giggles.)

Why he is so miserly that when he washes himself he cries the water he's forced to use. And his eggs! You, yourself, heard him at breakfast. It's the same thing every morning. He and his eggs. Why I can recite his "How to eat an egg in a profitable manner," from memory.

(She recites and imitates.)

"An egg ought to be pricked at one of its ends with a pin," he says. And, "through the puncture only half the contents should be sucked. In this fashion taste is satisfied, the pleasure of eating is long drawn, and the purse does not grow empty."

FLAMINIA

(Laughingly joins ARGENTINA mimicking alternately)

Moreover,

ARGENTINA

the egg is still very valuable,

FLAMINIA

because,

ARGENTINA

the shell may be taken back to the poultry-farmer

FLAMINIA

so that with it

ARGENTINA

he may invite the hens
 (In unison with FLAMINIA)
 to lay more eggs.
 (They finish in laughter.)

ARGENTINA

The very idea!

FLAMINIA

That is pretty cheap.

ARGENTINA

I'd like to give him an egg, right in the...

FLAMINIA

Now Argentina, you mustn't be disrespectful. After all,
 he is your master, and my father.

ARGENTINA

All right, I won't say another word about it.

(Pause)

But when I think of you, his only daughter--how he wouldn't
 even let you buy one of those beautiful wedding gowns from
 Milan; how you have to work and slave and sew, to make your
 own--I could just...

(She wrings a garment dry with a loud splash.)

FLAMINIA

Oh, I don't mind the sewing, or making it myself.

(She sings.)

Oh, maybe I'm old-fashioned
 About my wedding dress,
 But a gown of my own, that my own hands have sewn
 Is the fondest of dreams I possess.

A gown that is lovely, and lacy, and white,
 A gown that is simple but fine,
 A gown that is plain, with an elegant train,
 A gown that I've made, that's all mine.

And wearing this gown, I'll glide down the aisle
 Toward my man, and our love we'll profess
 With the touch of our hands, and two small golden bands
 In a wedding that heaven will bless.

It may be sentimental,
 But on my wedding dress,
 Something borrowed, and blue, something old, something new,
 Will be sewn for good luck, I'll confess.

A gown that is lovely, and lacy, and white,
 A gown that is simple but fine,
 A gown that is plain, with an elegant train,
 A gown that I've made, that's all mine.

With a radiant smile, I'll glide up the aisle
 With the man who's the love of my life.
 We'll walk side by side, my groom, and his bride,
 The newlywed husband and wife.

ARGENTINA

The newlywed husband and wife.

FLAMINIA

The newlywed husband and wife.

(With the laughter and commotion of FLAMINIA
 and ARGENTINA the venerable PANTALONE is
 aroused. He enters.)

PANTALONE

I say, I say what's all this noise and singing? Flaminia,
 I say, are you listening to me? Argentina, I am trying to
 run a respectable establishment here. Are you trying to
 drive any possible customers away with your antics? I
 say, are you?

(To ARGENTINA as she begins to answer)

Are you still washing? Slow, slow, slow! It's a wonder I
 put up with your laziness.

ARGENTINA

You put up with it because you couldn't get anyone else to
 work for you as cheaply as I do. I only stay because of
 Flaminia.

PANTALONE

Yes. Well, that's neither here nor there. Here, here,
 why isn't Flaminia helping you? It seems to me she could
 do something around here to earn her keep, instead of sit-
 ting there on her--What are you doing?

FLAMINIA

Sewing, papa.

PANTALONE

Sewing what?

FLAMINIA

My wedding dress.

ARGENTINA

Yes, her wedding dress.

PANTALONE

Hush, you!

FLAMINIA

I must have it ready, for if the day should...

PANTALONE

Yes, yes, yes. Well never mind that now. Your problems are not what I want to talk about. Will you stop your needlework and listen to me? It's time you and I had a long talk. Now, the serious institution of marriage is-- marriage is--there comes a time...

(Both ARGENTINA and FLAMINIA are listening intently.)

FLAMINIA

Yes?

(ARGENTINA giggles.)

PANTALONE

What are you laughing at?

ARGENTINA

(The obedient girl)

Sorry, sir.

PANTALONE

Humph! As I was saying, marriage--marriage...

(ARGENTINA still peering at him eagerly, giggles and smothers her laughter.)

PANTALONE

Will you stop that confounded cackling?

ARGENTINA

(Again obediently)

Sorry, sir.

PANTALONE

Where was I?

(He looks at ARGENTINA.)

Oh yes.

(He lowers his voice and speaks specifically to FLAMINIA.)

Marriage...

(ARGENTINA, still watching closely, cannot control her laughter.)

PANTALONE

If you don't stop that croaking I'll, I'll--I know--I will give you--a triple recipe of spaghetti to make!

(She is sobered, and moans.)

PANTALONE

There now, be silent, and finish the wash.

ARGENTINA

But...

PANTALONE

Not another peep out of you.

ARGENTINA

But...

PANTALONE

Not a word! As I was saying, marriage--

(He stops and quickly turns back to ARGENTINA to see if he can catch her in a snicker.)

That's better. Marriage...

(ARGENTINA giggles. PANTALONE wheels around rapidly, but she is too fast for him. She has sobered in time. He is about to say something to her, but she interrupts.)

ARGENTINA

You didn't catch me.

PANTALONE

(Disgusted, he decides to plow onward. He begins full speed ahead, deliberately ignoring ARGENTINA.)

As I was saying, marriage is a custom as ancient as the world. There were marriages before you, and there will still be marriages after you.

FLAMINIA

I know that papa. I heard that ever so long ago.

(ARGENTINA, with her back to the audience shakes with laughter.)

PANTALONE

You did? Well, I'll come straight to the point then. Having no sons, having no child but you, a daughter, that is--I have resolved to perpetuate the family of Pantalone. Do you perceive what I am coming to? I have resolved, in short, to get married!

ARGENTINA

What?

FLAMINIA

Oh, papa!

PANTALONE

Yes. Yes, my daughter, I--You seem very surprised.

(To audience)

She seems very surprised.

(To FLAMINIA)

Yet can it be denied that I am still a fine figure of a man? Consider my air.

(PANTALONE strikes a pose, ARGENTINA holds her nose.)

my shape,

(The girls look at one another.)

my lightness.

(He leaps and stumbles.)

FLAMINIA

(Finally accepting the idea)

You are going to be married, then, papa.

PANTALONE

Yes, if you think it good my child.

ARGENTINA

To a woman?

PANTALONE

(Sarcastically)

No, to a bed warmer.

(Realizing what he has said)

Oh my--What a question.

(ARGENTINA giggles.)

FLAMINIA

(Getting the facts straight)

You are marrying a woman?

PANTALONE

(Angered)

I think that each of you has your wits in a sling. Am I beyond the age? Don't you know that a man is never older than he feels? Dr. Gratiano was telling me only this morning, while giving me an injection,

(He sits down carefully.)

that I look less than forty-five.

ARGENTINA

(Sagely)

That was because he wasn't looking at your face.

FLAMINIA

Argentina!

PANTALONE

I am as I am, but I feel that I need a wife. I am bursting with health,

(He coughs.)

And I have found a woman that I feel I could desire. She is beautiful...

ARGENTINA

(Interjects)

Rich?

PANTALONE

reasonably young,

ARGENTINA

(Interjects)

Rich?

PANTALONE

respectable.

ARGENTINA

(Interjecting with finality.)

Rich!

PANTALONE

(Exasperated)

Yes, and rich. What's wrong with that? In short, a chance in a thousand.

FLAMINIA

As I am your daughter, and know the respect I owe you, and since you are in such good health, and since you seem to

have made up your mind, I will say that you are very wise to take a wife. But, I must also add that I cannot but feel a little hurt that you have never introduced me to her.

PANTALONE

But daughter, you know her well.

FLAMINIA

I do?

ARGENTINA

She does?

PANTALONE

Of course. It's Isabella!

ARGENTINA

(Being agreeable, but not really comprehending)
Of course, it's Isabella.

(She does a take.)

Isabella? You mean the Isabella?

(Pointing to the middle house)

That Isabella?

PANTALONE

None other! Why, I thought you would guess.

FLAMINIA

(Incredulously)

Isabella has agreed to marry you?

ARGENTINA

She's given you her hand?

PANTALONE

(Confused)

Her hand? Her hand? What do I want with her hand? Oh, her hand in marriage you mean.

(He chuckles, then stops abruptly.)

No, not yet, but she will. How could there be any question about her accepting me? Certainly she would not refuse?

ARGENTINA

(To Audience)

Certainly.

FLAMINIA

I think you must consider that possibility. After all, she is engaged to Capitano Alanzo Spavento, who may return any day.

PANTALONE

Nonsense. She no longer loves him.

FLAMINIA

Dr. Gratiano, then--He is very fond of her.

ARGENTINA

Yes. From what I've heard, his interests in her are not purely medical.

PANTALONE

What? But how could you possibly think that she would prefer him to me? That pompous fool! I am obviously the better man.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

Obviously.

PANTALONE

So the old Doctor is interested in her too, is he? Well, if I catch him within an inch of her--apartment, or anyone for that matter, I shall beat him within an inch of his life.

ARGENTINA

(She gestures to the audience.)

An inch!

PANTALONE

(To ARGENTINA)

Now cut that out, and listen to me.

(Including FLAMINIA)

Isabella should be coming by here within the hour on her morning stroll. I've promised her some cream for her cats. Call me at once when she arrives.

(Pause)

I see I mustn't waste any more time in waiting to propose.

(To FLAMINIA)

Did you hear what I said?

FLAMINIA

Yes, papa!

PANTALONE

(To ARGENTINA)

As for you, finish that wash!

(He exits.)

ARGENTINA

The old...
(She scrubs and mumbles.)

FLAMINIA

Imagine, marrying at his age.

ARGENTINA

(Stops scrubbing)
Imagine Isabella for a stepmother! Imagine that!

FLAMINIA

Oh, no!
(Pause)
But why should I worry? She won't have him. She won't be marrying anybody for a while. I mean she's having too much fun being single and independent.

ARGENTINA

You never can tell. It might not be your father, but she's ready for marriage! Why she could have any man she wanted.

FLAMINIA

Don't be silly. All she has to offer is money.

ARGENTINA

All? And what makes you think money isn't something? It's her money your father's attracted to, as much as anything else. And really, Flaminia, you must admit that her face and her figure--well--after she's had time to pad and paint, I mean. Oh, yes, she could have any man she wants.

FLAMINIA

You're silly.

ARGENTINA

Silly am I? Well, I guess I know what I'm talking about.

FLAMINIA

As if she could take my Mario away from me.

ARGENTINA

Well, she has his father doing cartwheels for her now, and if it's possible with the stallion, it's probable with the colt! Anyway, that's what my old mother used to say.

FLAMINIA

Oh, be still! Mario's not a bit like the Doctor. His only interest is me.

ARGENTINA

I'm glad you're so certain. But don't say I didn't warn you.

(She washes and hums innocently.)

Da, da, dee, dum...

FLAMINIA

What are you da, da, dee, dumm-ing about? What do you know that I don't? You've been hinting all morning. Tell me! If you don't tell me, I'll have papa order you to prepare a quadruple batch of spaghetti every day for the next two weeks.

ARGENTINA

(Horrorified)

All right. All right! Well, I wouldn't breathe this to a soul, except to you, my dear, sweet, kind, loving, considerate...

FLAMINIA

Enough of that!

ARGENTINA

I wouldn't breathe this to a soul, not that you aren't a soul and the kindest soul alive...

FLAMINIA

(Exasperated)

Argentina, you are getting to sound just like Mario's father. Go on. Go on!

ARGENTINA

Well, since you've asked me; since you've interrogated me on the subject; since you've quizzed me regarding Isabella; and

(She gulps.)

since you've threatened me with a quadruple recipe of spaghetti for two weeks, ugh!

FLAMINIA

(At the end of her patience)

All right, all right!

ARGENTINA

(Subdued)

I'll tell you.

FLAMINIA

Finally!

ARGENTINA

(Intimately and mysteriously)

I saw Mario coming away from Isabella's house early this morning.

FLAMINIA

(The bomb has been dropped)

Early? How early?

ARGENTINA

(Detached)

Oh, early.

FLAMINIA

But, but, that's easily explained.

ARGENTINA

And what's more, he was carrying a satchel.

FLAMINIA

A satchel? What kind of satchel?

ARGENTINA

(Detached)

Oh, a satchel.

FLAMINIA

(Upset)

A satchel?

ARGENTINA

And ever since Isabella found out you were engaged to be engaged, she's been more attentive to Mario than to anyone else.

FLAMINIA

Well, she'd better not--He'd better not--They'd better not--Why am I getting so upset? There's probably nothing to it. He probably--yes, of course, he was just helping his father! Old Dr. Gratiano must have been ill, and Mario was just taking some medicine to her. You just told me how Dr. Gratiano feels about Isabella. He wouldn't waste any time in making her well, if he thought she were ill.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

He wouldn't waste any time in making her--

(To FLAMINIA)

Well, I don't think so. Isabella didn't look very sick standing there blowing him kisses as he left.

FLAMINIA

(Weakly)

Kisses? Well, what are you thinking? If you're so smart, what was Mario doing there? Never mind. Don't tell me. You're just trying to make me jealous.

(Almost in tears, to audience)

Why if I thought Mario were unfaithful to me I should die of a broken heart.

(To ARGENTINA)

Just because you're not happy in love you want me to be unhappy too. I won't be jealous!

ARGENTINA

Jealous? Jealous? Why, there's not a jealous bone in your body.

FLAMINIA

I'm glad you admit it.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

I've always said there's not a jealous bone in her body.

FLAMINIA

And if Mario wants to see Isabella early in the morning with a suitcase, he has a perfect right.

ARGENTINA

Of course.

FLAMINIA

(Tears are beginning to stream down her cheeks.)

Just because we're going to be engaged to be married, and I just have a few stitches more of embroidery to put in my wedding dress, and we love each other very deeply,

(Wailing)

Mario is perfectly free to go and come when and where he pleases.

ARGENTINA

Absolutely.

FLAMINIA

(Sobbing violently)

Stop agreeing with me and finish your wash!

ARGENTINA

It's all finished, except for the drying.

FLAMINIA

(Her sorrow turning to anger)
Wait till I get my hands on that Mario!

ARGENTINA

What?

FLAMINIA

Nothing. Hang up your wash!

ARGENTINA

I need some help.

FLAMINIA

Well I'm busy.

(VIRGINIO enters from his home stage left.

He is unobserved by ARGENTINA.)

Here comes Virginio. Ask him to help you.

ARGENTINA

(Taken completely by surprise, she scurries
to arrange herself, and shrieks)

Virginio? Oh help!

VIRGINIO

(To the rescue)

Did somebody call for help?

FLAMINIA

Yes. Argentina did. She's hanging up the wash.

VIRGINIO

(He is smitten.)

Argentina? Wash?

(ARGENTINA has turned around. They stand there
speechless, staring at one another. Both are
considerably flustered.)

FLAMINIA

Well, don't just stand there gaping at each other. Argentina, get busy with the wash.

ARGENTINA

Wash?

FLAMINIA

The wash.

ARGENTINA

Oh, yes--the wash. We do have to hang up the wash, don't we? First we'll need a line.

VIRGINIO

A line?

ARGENTINA

You know, a clothes line.

VIRGINIO

Oh?

ARGENTINA

Now let me see. It was here a while ago. Where could it have gone?

(Ad libbing as they go, they search in several ridiculous places. VIRGINIO gets on his hands and knees and crawls along the floor, not looking where he is going. He heads toward FLAMINIA. ARGENTINA, also on her hands and knees comes around FLAMINIA from the other direction and meets VIRGINIO face to face as they simultaneously lift the folds of FLAMINIA'S voluminous wedding gown. ARGENTINA giggles. VIRGINIO falls back on his seat.)

FLAMINIA

Well, you won't find it there.

VIRGINIO

Sorry.

FLAMINIA

(To ARGENTINA)

I don't think you brought it out.

ARGENTINA

(Thinking)

Oh, yes--I must not have brought it out. I know, I left it by the spaghetti recipe. I thought the one would remind me of the other.

(She giggles.)

Come Virginio. You can help me find it--inside.

FLAMINIA

(Interrupting)

I'm sure you'll find it much more quickly by yourself.

ARGENTINA

But...

FLAMINIA

Go on now.

ARGENTINA

But, I need some strong arms to carry it out.
 (ARGENTINA touches VIRGINIO'S arm. He
 draws away, embarrassed.)

FLAMINIA

It's not that heavy.

ARGENTINA

Oh, all right.
 (To audience)
 Some help she is--
 (Before she exits, she winks at VIRGINIO
 and throws him a kiss. He is drunk with
 her sweetness, and staggers to his seat.)

FLAMINIA

Really, Virginio, for the clever servant that Mario says
 you are, you certainly act stupidly around her. But enough
 of that.

(She glances to right and left.)
 Now that we're alone--where was Mario this morning? What
 was he doing at Isabella's? What was in the satchel?
 Speak up. Just don't sit there. Say something. It's no
 use to hide it from me. I've heard all about it.

VIRGINIO

(The bombardment has had no effect.
 VIRGINIO is still in a trance.)
 She's beautiful.

FLAMINIA

Virginio!

VIRGINIO

(Stands up abruptly)
 Yes'm.
 (He bows.)

FLAMINIA

Never mind that nonsense. Just answer me.

VIRGINIO
Did you ask a question?

FLAMINIA
Several.

VIRGINIO
Oh?

FLAMINIA
Answer me now, while Argentina is gone.

VIRGINIO
(At the mention of her name he is off again.)
Argentina.

FLAMINIA
(She snaps him out of it.)
Virginio!

VIRGINIO
Yes, yes, yes. Oh, Miss Flaminia, may I tell you something
that no one else knows?

FLAMINIA
No one?

VIRGINIO
Except Mario.

FLAMINIA
Yes, yes?

VIRGINIO
I don't know what to do about it.

FLAMINIA
Yes, yes, yes?

VIRGINIO
It concerns me deeply.

FLAMINIA
Go on!

VIRGINIO
I love Argentina.

FLAMINIA

Is that all?

VIRGINIO

What?

FLAMINIA

Oh, nothing.

VIRGINIO

(He sings and illustrates his actions as
he goes.)

Whenever I see that certain girl--
My heart, it skips a beat,
And hard as I try, I don't know why,
I blaze a fast retreat.

But cross that heart, and hope to die,
One glance in her direction,
My mind goes blank. Again I've lost
My chance to show her some affection.

FLAMINIA

(To audience)

This needs correction.

VIRGINIO

With fast effection.

Whenever I see that certain girl,
My tongue gets tied in knots.
My knees get weak. I feel antique;
And all I see is spots!

Perhaps I'm just a coward,
Unique in my defection.
I've come to you for help. I seek
To cure my imperfection.

FLAMINIA

Tried introspection?

VIRGINIO

(Thinking)

No recollection.

I try in vain, to find the key.
I've got to break this trance.

I'll not stop short of victory,
When she and I will find romance!

I'll need direction!

FLAMINIA

In retrospection, your complexion shows infection from
subjection to perfection.

VIRGINIO

It does?

FLAMINIA

It does!

VIRGINIO

Oh my.

(No longer singing.)

What'll I do?

FLAMINIA

You'd better ask the Doctor for a cure. He'd know better
than I.

VIRGINIO

The Doctor?

FLAMINIA

Your master's father, Dr. Gratiano!

VIRGINIO

Oh yes. A fine idea. It's a good thing you reminded me.
I'd almost forgotten what I came here for.

FLAMINIA

(Aside)

At last.

(To VIRGINIO)

To deliver a message?

VIRGINIO

Yes.

FLAMINIA

(Eagerly)

From Mario?

VIRGINIO

From his father.

FLAMINIA

(Disappointed)

His father?

VIRGINIO

Yes'm. He would like to request a double order of spaghetti with sauce to be delivered to the home of Miss Isabella Puchiano.

FLAMINIA

Why there?

VIRGINIO

He's invited himself to dinner there. His intention, although it's a secret, is to propose.

FLAMINIA

Propose marriage?

VIRGINIO

(Sheepishly)

What else?

FLAMINIA

Oh,,no!

ARGENTINA

(Enters carrying a rope)

Well here it is. I've found it.

FLAMINIA

Hurry and put it up then.

ARGENTINA

Come help me, Virginio.

FLAMINIA

Argentina, Virginio came to tell us that Dr. Gratiano wants a double order of spaghetti for dinner today.

ARGENTINA

A double order of spaghetti?

FLAMINIA

Yes spaghetti.

ARGENTINA

(Accepting the fact and fixing the clothes line.)

Well, I suppose if he does, he does. Only one person I ever knew liked spaghetti better than Dr. Gratiano. You know that was Polichenelle.

(She has tied one end of the rope to the clothes-pole.)

FLAMINIA

Polichinelle?

ARGENTINA

You know--that servant of Capitano Alanzo Spavento.

FLAMINIA

(Still sewing)

How interesting.

ARGENTINA

Yes, he'd go to your father, and in that squeaky voice of his he'd say, "Mr. Pantalone, Mr. Pantalone, Capitano Alanzo Spavento requires a triple order of spaghetti." And your father would say--

(To VIRGINIO, referring to the line)

It won't reach.

VIRGINIO

The spaghetti?

ARGENTINA

No, no. The rope!

(She has discovered that the rope is not long enough to reach the other clothes pole, and the pole cannot be moved. She has an idea, and gives the loose end of the rope to VIRGINIO.)

Here, hold this.

(She takes out an oversized pair of scissors and cuts the rope in the middle. Both ends drop. During the speeches she takes the piece of rope that VIRGINIO has been holding and ties one end to the other clothes pole. Now, discovering that she needs a link in the middle, she guides VIRGINIO to that area, and places in each of his hands the loose end of each rope. Content with VIRGINIO as the middle section of the clothes line she proceeds to hang the wash.)

Really all that spaghetti wasn't for Capitano at all. Capitano never ate spaghetti. He was strictly a lasagne man, himself. I certainly wish the Capitano would get back, in spite of his bragging. No man is safe around here with Isabella on the loose. And speaking of the devil, here she comes.

(From her home center stage ISABELLA enters. She sways seductively toward the group, stage right, in her own inimitable fashion.)

ISABELLA

(Sweetly)

Why, hello there everybody. I was just taking my morning stroll, and when I saw you all just sitting out here I thought I'd just come over and say hello.

FLAMINIA

Hello.

ARGENTINA

Hello.

VIRGINIO

Hello.

ISABELLA

Why, Virginio, you handsome man!

(She chucks him under the chin. He blushes.)

What are you doing over here?

(She laughs.)

I thought you were a scarecrow at first,--holding up that line so straight and tall.

(To ARGENTINA)

But I suppose when a girl can't hold a man one way, she just has to think of another.

ARGENTINA

(She is the match for ISABELLA.)

And then there are those women who can't seem to hold a man at all.

ISABELLA

(Deliberately misinterpreting)

Yes, Flaminia, my poor dear--What is that you've been sewing on day after day? Why, I do declare.

(She feigns surprise.)
It's a wedding dress! Why you poor child, I didn't know you were taking in sewing.

ARGENTINA

She's not! It's her own.

ISABELLA

Oh, I see. She's going to be prepared just in case, you might say.

(She laughs.)

I always say, there's no harm in being prepared. And I do wish you luck. I hope it won't be too long before you find a use for it. Such a lovely thing.

ARGENTINA

How many years has your dress been in moth balls? I was just washing, and I thought you might like it rinsed out before it turned completely yellow.

FLAMINIA

Argentina, be still.

ISABELLA

(Laughs, but not amused)

How droll your servant is.

FLAMINIA

Yes, she is, isn't she?

ARGENTINA

You didn't answer my question, Miss Puchiano. I'd be happy to wash it.

ISABELLA

Thank you so much, Argentina, for offering; and I'd love to give you the work, but as you know I am engaged to be married to Capitano Alanzo Spavanto.

ARGENTINA

Yes, we've known for the past seven years.

ISABELLA

Hmmm. Well, when he left in search of his long lost twin brother, he promised to bring back, along with his brother, rare fabrics from the four corners of the earth for my wedding gown.

ARGENTINA

I'm sure you'd need that much material for a dress to cover you.

FLAMINIA

(Aside to ARGENTINA)

Argentina, stop!

ARGENTINA

(Aside to FLAMINIA)

Well, I won't stand here and listen to her insult you.

ISABELLA

As I was saying, my dear Capitano must have been unavoidably detained.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

He probably knew what he was doing.

ISABELLA

But, I do hope he returns soon, for I'm afraid I have fallen in love with another man.

VIRGINIO

In love?

FLAMINIA

With another?

ARGENTINA

Man?

ISABELLA

Yes. And if the Capitano doesn't return soon, I'm afraid that man will force little old me to marry him. He's so persuasive, I can't resist his passionate love.

ARGENTINA

And who is this man who is so enamored of you?

ISABELLA

Well, I don't think I should mention his name since there's nothing definite yet.

ARGENTINA

(Under her breath)

I might have known.

(To FLAMINIA)

There probably won't be either.

ISABELLA

Well, I'd better be going now. It's time to give my

kittens their lunch. Oh, by the way, I'm all out of cream. Argentina will you be a sweet child and get the cream Flaminia's dear father promised me?

ARGENTINA

(Aside to FLAMINIA)

I'll not do a thing for her. She just wants to get you alone, to pick you apart.

FLAMINIA

(Aside to ARGENTINA)

All right.

(To VIRGINIO)

Virginio, you look tired. Argentina will hold the line a moment while you go in and get her cream from my father. Be sure to tell him Miss Puchiano is here.

VIRGINIO

Yes'm.

ISABELLA

He'd do anything for me, wouldn't you dear.

(VIRGINIO gives an embarrassed combination of a nod and a shake as he exits.

ARGENTINA glares, but is ignored by ISABELLA.)

The maidservants nowadays aren't very obedient, are they?

ARGENTINA

(Under her breath)

If I weren't holding this line.

ISABELLA

You know, Flaminia, your father is such a dear, but you really must speak to him. There are so many men madly in love with me,

(ARGENTINA makes a peculiar sound, but is ignored again.)

and he is so--so insanely jealous. I just can't refuse to see all but him. You understand, I'm sure, my dear. Why the other day--you know the poor old dear has trouble seeing --he really ought to have his glasses changed. Well, the other day I found him beating my footstool with his cane. He said he thought it was another suitor who had curled up and fallen asleep in my apartment. I just can't have my furniture ruined because of his jealousy. You, you do understand I'm sure, my dear.

ARGENTINA

Of course she does. It's a pity though, that all your lovers, as you say, are so far advanced in years, and have such physical imperfections.

FLAMINIA

Argentina, be silent.

ARGENTINA

(Paying no attention)

But then I suppose older women can only hope to attract older men.

ISABELLA

I wasn't aware that I was talking to you, but for your information, a mature, well-developed woman is found attractive by younger men as well as older.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

Well-developed? She's over ripe!

ISABELLA

I have never been at a loss for lovers, while I have seen other women who had nary a one. My formula for getting and keeping a man is very simple, and, as I see you're in need, I'd be happy to give it to you.

(To ARGENTINA)

Perhaps I'd better explain it in cooking terms that a servant girl would understand:

(A patter song and dance with a bump and grind or two for good measure.)

A tiny pinch of coquetry
Is what I recommend
For seasoning my recipe--
Creates the perfect blend
In the manners of a woman
Who wants to catch a man.
It renders her more powerful
Than any other plan--
A hundred times more loveable,
More beautiful, more true,
And so much more desirable,
The perfect wench to woo.
Still--
With coquetry as vinegar,
With too much in the sauce,
It's sharp and it's detestable.
It's always indigestible,
And ends a total loss.

With coquetry as vinegar
 A sauce with not enough
 Is faint and very seldom tasted,
 Weak, and almost always wasted,
 Is sure to cause rebuff.

But in the sauce with perfect blend,
 Male appetites are stirred,
 And hungrily they come to be
 The first to test consistency
 To overcome resistancy
 With their profound persistency.
 They come en masse, in herd!

And so it is with any girl
 Reputed a coquette,
 If honour is the price she's paid,
 The devil take her! Yet--
 If she is no coquette at all
 And looks so heaven sent,
 Why that's the worst that can befall.
 Her virtue is confounded
 With her temperament.
 One look and you'd suppose her
 A lethargic beauty merely,
 A gross disgrace to womanhood,
 Who's shirked her duty clearly.

But a perfect combination
 Of beauty, spice, and charm,
 Will win her admiration,
 And every male disarm.
 For a woman who has sparkle
 That reflects in lovers' eyes,
 Will always be assured of love
 That to the stars will rise!

And if I'm repetitious,
 It's so you'll comprehend,
 And hear once more my formula--
 I'm not quite at an end.

A tiny pinch of coquetry
 Is what I recommend
 For seasoning my recipe--
 Creates the perfect blend
 In the manners of a woman
 Who wants to catch a man.

It renders her more powerful
 Than any other plan--
 A hundred times more loveable,
 More beautiful, more true,
 And so much more desirable,
 The perfect wench to woo.

(No longer singing)

So you see, it really isn't difficult to get a man.

ARGENTINA

I can't understand what's keeping Virginio.

ISABELLA

And if being coquettish has no effect, the only way to make a man profess his love for you, if he has any, is to shatter his self-confidence. Make him think that he is not the only pebble on the shore. Show him that he is not the only fish in the Mediterranean. In short, make him jealous.

ARGENTINA

(Pretending not to pay attention)

Da, da, dee, dum...

ISABELLA

(Drowning her out.)

But that's often both difficult and dangerous. Sometimes there is no other male around capable of making him jealous. And sometimes he isn't the jealous type, and just gives up. But that's the chance one has to take. Isn't it my dear?

ARGENTINA

Are you quite finished advising?

ISABELLA

Why, yes my dear, and I do hope I've helped you some.

FLAMINIA

(Sensing a storm, calls)

Virginio!

ARGENTINA

Virginio, hurry with that cream for the cat.

ISABELLA

Kittens my dear, kittens.

ARGENTINA

Of course.

VIRGINIO

(Off)

Coming. We're coming!
(He enters empty handed.)

ARGENTINA

Well, where's the cream?

VIRGINIO

Mr. Pantalone insisted upon bringing it to Isabella himself. He said he didn't trust it out of his sight a moment and that he wanted to be sure that Miss Puchiano got it all--and he wanted to be the one to give it to her.

ISABELLA

Isn't he the sweetest dear. I have always...

PANTALONE

(Enters carrying cream)

Ah, ha. Isabella, my child. Radiant as ever.
(He is beaming, but his eyes fail him and he embraces ARGENTINA by mistake.)

ARGENTINA

Hey! Wait a minute.

PANTALONE

(Fumbling)

Ugh, sorry.

ISABELLA

Oh, Mr. Pantalone, you do say the sweetest things.

PANTALONE

(Has by this time found and put on his glasses)

So nice to see you once again.

(He bows gallantly, but has trouble getting back up to a standing position.)

I have been looking forward to seeing you all morning. Won't you honour me by coming into my humble establishment. We could engage in a nice lengthy conversation.

ISABELLA

I am sorry, my dear, but I am receiving guests at home in just a few moments, so I really must take the cream and run.

PANTALONE

(He will not release the cream pitcher with so little reward.)

Guests? What guests? Male guests? In a few moments?

ISABELLA

Yes. Two charming gentlemen.. As a matter of fact, here they are coming already. And, oh dear, I am not even home to receive them.

PANTALONE

(Squinting)

It's--

(Furious and astonished)

Dr. Gratiano!

FLAMINIA

(Heartbroken)

And Mario. It's Mario.

(At this point begins the confusion which develops rapidly into mass bedlam. Speeches tumble over speeches, and characters ad lib appropriately to gradually build from a disturbed undertone to a climactic chaos.)

FLAMINIA

(To Mario)

So it is true! You are in love with her. Argentina was right.

(Finally releasing her feelings to
ISABELLA)

And you, you were out to steal Mario all the time. You think you've won, do you? Well, I'll show you!

(She flies at ISABELLA)

ISABELLA

Stop her, stop her. She's...

(She is pushed to the floor.)

mad...

(MARIO stoops to assist ISABELLA.)

FLAMINIA

That's right, help her. You, you--

(Shrieking, with mounting hysteria)

Pick her up, so I can scratch her eyes out. I'll pull her hair out by the roots.

ISABELLA

Get her away from me. Owwww. She bit me! You little snip. You bit me. I'll teach you to bite.

FLAMINIA

When I get through with you Mario won't want you. Nobody will.

ISABELLA

Eeeeeee! Stop her! Help! Mario! Virginio! Dr. Gratianooooo!

(They all try to keep the women separated, but FLAMINIA slips away each time.)

ARGENTINA

(Dying to let the clothes lines drop.)

Attagirl, Flaminia. Give her a right to the jaw, an uppercut on the chin, and a left hook for me!

MARIO

(Trying to keep them apart. For the first time what he says is really heard.)

Flaminia, Flaminia! What has come over you? Leave Isabella alone!

FLAMINIA

You, you, traitor. All the time you made love to me and you were false, false, false!

(Wails, to audience.)

He's broken my heart.

(To MARIO)

Get out of my sight! You aren't even worth fighting for!

MARIO

Flaminia, my dearest.

FLAMINIA

(To audience)

I shall die, I know I shall die.

MARIO

My dearest Flaminia, my own one.

ARGENTINA

Don't you, "my dearest, my own one," her, you, you, man!

MARIO

(Bewildered)

But, what have I done?

GRATIANO

Yes, what has he done?

PANTALONE

You keep out of this, you.

GRATIANO

Who are you telling to keep out of this?

PANTALONE

You.

GRATIANO

Me?

PANTALONE

Y-O-U! And another thing, keep away from Isabella. She doesn't need any horse doctor buzz, buzz, buzzing around her.

GRATIANO

Horse doctor! Horse doctor! Who are you calling a horse doctor, sir?

PANTALONE

You! You, I'm calling a horse doctor, sir!

GRATIANO

(Considering)

Horse doctor?

VIRGINIO

(Stepping up the the DOCTOR GRATIANO protectively, and speaking to PANTALONE)

Perhaps he is, he takes care of you!

PANTALONE

What?

GRATIANO

Ha, ha, that's a good one! Yes, maybe I am. Ha, ha, I take care of you!

(To VIRGINIO, shaking his hand)

Thank you.

VIRGINIO

You're welcome.

PANTALONE

(To GRATIANO)

Are you calling me names?

VIRGINIO

(Stepping up again)

If the bridle fits, wear it.

(He whinnies.)

GRATIANO

(Again with muffled laughter, he shakes VIRGINIO'S hand.)

Thank you.

VIRGINIO

You're welcome.

ARGENTINA

(Taking sides herself, and shielding PANTALONE.)

You can't talk to my master that way.

VIRGINIO

I can't?

ARGENTINA

No you can't! Can he, Flaminia?

FLAMINIA

(Wails, louder than before.)

VIRGINIO

(Taking courage)

Who's going to stop me?

GRATIANO

Yes. Who's going to stop him?

PANTALONE

I for one.

(He raises his cane threateningly, and begins to chase VIRGINIO. Round and round they go. PANTALONE is still carrying the cream pitcher as he leaps after VIRGINIO who is too fast for him. Suddenly, PANTALONE trips and thuds to the floor. The cream goes flying.)

ISABELLA

(Wailing)

Now look what you've done. My poor starved kittens!

PANTALONE

(More concerned for himself)

Oh, hang your blasted kittens!

ISABELLA

Hang my kittens? Hang my kittens! Oooooo! My poor, poor, kittens!

(She sobs hysterically again.)

GRATIANO

Now perceive what you've accomplished! You clumsy--

(He goes to comfort ISABELLA.)

There, there, Isabella...

PANTALONE

(Has he this time picked himself up and brushed himself off. He rushes over to ISABELLA to apologize.)

Isabella, forgive me. I misspoke in the heat of the moment. Please don't cry. I love your kittens. I adore your kittens! I idolize your kittens! Here, here's my handkerchief. Now dry your eyes. Please?

(From his sleeve he pulls an enormous colored handkerchief.)

GRATIANO

Don't believe him Isabella. My admiration for your kittens far surpasses his--vastly superior to his.

(ISABELLA continues to sniff. PANTALONE still extends his handkerchief for ISABELLA'S use. She finally decides to take it. She just about has it in her hand when GRATIANO pulls her hand away. To PANTALONE)

Take your contaminated rag away from her. Can't you see she doesn't want it.

(To ISABELLA, as he pulls from his waist an equally large white cloth)

Here, take mine.

PANTALONE

Get away from her with that antiseptic dust cloth. Go do some good and punish your servant for making her cry.

ARGENTINA

(Trying to protect VIRGINIO in spite of it all)

But it wasn't his fault that she cried. Don't you--

(She finally forgets herself and gestures. The clothes line falls. All her work for nothing. She looks at it stunned. She picks up one item, turns it over, and sees that it is filthy. This is more than she

can take. She begins to sputter, then out comes a terrific wail.)

FLAMINIA

(Joins the song of ARGENTINA)

ISABELLA

(Adds her voice to the chorus)

MARIO

Oh, no.

VIRGINIO

Argentina, Argentina, what's the trouble?

ARGENTINA

The trouble is, all my washing is dirty again. I'll have to do it all over.

(She continues to wail.)

VIRGINIO

Don't cry, Argentina. I'll help you. I'll throw away your dirty wash water, and get fresh water for you, and together we'll do the wash.

(Although he has been timid in his proposal, he lifts the wash tub aggressively, carries it to the footlights, and throws the contents, confetti, into the audience. Meanwhile, the women continue to wail, while the men implore them to be quiet.)

ALL MEN

Please stop crying. Please? Stop! We beg of you! We implore you.

(Suddenly there is a trumpet blast. The crying is turned off as if it were a water faucet. All eyes are turned to stage left from which enters POLICHINELLE, who is carrying a trumpet. Once on stage, he toots again.)

POLICHINELLE

(In a great but squeaky voice)

Announcing the arrival of Capitano Alanzo Spavento, returned home from seven years at sea in search of his long lost twin brother.

(He blows the trumpet again.)

CAPITANO ALANZO SPAVENTO enters with great bravado. He bows deeply to the assembled crowd. Seeing ISABELLA he strides toward her.)

ALANZO

Isabella, my one and only true and faithful love. Take me, I'm home!

(ISABELLA stands for a moment, stunned. She then falls backward, fainting into the arms of PANTALONE and GRATIANO, but not before she has uttered one final blood curdling wail. This cry has a chain reaction, and is followed by similar noises from both FLAMINIA and ARGENTINA. CAPITANO is bewildered. FLAMINIA rejects MARIO; and VIRGINIO is trying to work up enough courage to comfort ARGENTINA as--

THE CURTAIN FALLS)

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT II

SCENE 1

(A short while has elapsed since the end of the first act. The CAPITANO and POLICHINELLE enter from one of the two entrances to ISABELLA'S home. POLICHINELLE is grumbling.)

POLICHINELLE

Now, can we eat? For seven years I've tried to remember the taste of that magnificent spaghetti of Pantalone's Inn. I'm so hungry I could eat a...

ALANZO

Never! Never have I encountered such a successful return! Two beautiful wenches crying for joy at my appearance, and my own true love Isabella overcome with rapture at the sight of me. Such a homecoming! Such a homecoming...

POLICHINELLE

And now that we are home, and Isabella's home, and everybody's home, let's eat!

ALANZO

But then, I ask you Polichinelle, what woman would not be overjoyed to see me return? Have not women disobeyed their husbands and lovers for a glimpse of my glory? Have not goddesses been driven mad with love of me? Have not beautiful women the world over forsaken everything and offered their all for my affection, and the appeasement of my appetite?

(There is no answer from POLICHINELLE.)

Well, haven't they?

POLICHINELLE

Yes, if you say so. And speaking of appetite...

ALANZO

And here, I have returned to Isabella.

(He moans.)

Oh, oh...

POLICHINELLE

Capitano, aren't you well? I knew it.

(To audience)

We're dying of starvation. I keep telling him.

(To CAPITANO)

You need food.

ALANZO

No. No! Love is food enough for me. Oh, I am not ill; I am lamenting over love. Isn't it regrettable that so honorable and renowned a warrior as I, should lose his heart to a mere woman?

POLICHINELLE

Sad, very sad.

ALANZO

Yes, Isabella, my love--she alone can stay the murderous course of my sword and turn my thoughts to simple love. By my sword, by my sword--

(He pulls, but the sword will not come loose from the scabbard. He pulls again, but still without result.) To POLICHINELLE.)

Here, help me.

(They both pull. All at once the sword comes out and they are sent sprawling on the ground.)

Here, give me that...

(He takes the sword from POLICHINELLE.)

By this sword I swear eternal fidelity to her, my Isabella--the ornament of the century, the jewel of the universe, the...

POLICHINELLE

(Wails)

I'm hungry.

ALANZO

Well all right. There's no need to shout. Here's Pantalone's Inn--

(POLICHINELLE is about to knock.)

No don't knock--let them come to me.

POLICHINELLE

But how will they know you're here?

ALANZO

They will sense the greatness of my presence.

POLICHINELLE

Oh.

(They wait, but nothing happens.)

Well?

ALANZO

(Never defeated.)

Thick walls.

POLICHINELLE

No doubt.

(He knocks.)

ARGENTINA

(From inside, sniffing)

Who's there?

POLICHINELLE

She wants to know, who's there.

ALANZO

Who's there? Who's there? Why, we're there! I mean here.

POLICHINELLE

(Calling)

We're here.

ARGENTINA

(Off)

Who's we?

POLICHINELLE

She wants to know, who's we?

ALANZO

I heard her. Let me answer.

(Calling)

Don't you recognize my voice? Don't you know who it is?

ARGENTINA

(Off)

No!

POLICHINELLE

She said no.

ALANZO

I heard her! Head and belly! Blood and bones! Fire and
brimstone! It is I!

ARGENTINA

(Still off)

Who is I?

ALANZO

I am who I am! Italy trembles at my name, Spain reverences me, I terrify France. All nations love me and all fear me in peace as in war--and she has the nerve to ask who I am! I think no more of chewing up a prince than...

POLICHINELLE

(He has been hunting for food and finds an onion.)

An onion.

ALANZO

That's right! An onion! No, no--

(Directed to ARGENTINA)

And you ask who I am.

ARGENTINA

(In a meek voice)

Who?

ALANZO

(Ready to explode)

I am Capitano Alanzo Spavento!

POLICHINELLE

(Adds his two cents)

And his servant, Polichinelle.

ARGENTINA

(Enters)

Oh, I am sorry sir. I was all alone downstairs, washing. My mistress is up there,

(She indicates a higher level)

pining away from love.

ALANZO

(Aside to POLICHINELLE)

Well, they all can't have me.

ARGENTINA

(Continuing)

Mr. Pantalone's no help at all, and, well, you've been away so long, that I didn't recognize your voice. It really frightened me, you know.

ALANZO

(Pleased)

Frightened? Were you frightened my child? Polichinelle, she was frightened.

POLICHINELLE

Eh. So, she was frightened. Let's eat.

ALANZO

What's your name my dear?

ARGENTINA

(She curtsies.)

Argentina, sir.

ALANZO

A delightful name for such an intelligent girl, isn't it, Polci?

POLICHINELLE

Sure, delightful.

ALANZO

It's no wonder you were frightened, Argentina! Whole armies are frightened of the mere mention of my name. Are they not, Polichinelle?

POLICHINELLE

(He is eating the onion.)

Huh?

ALANZO

Are not whole armies frightened at the mere mention of my name?

POLICHINELLE

(Without conviction)

Oh yes.

(To audience)

He's frightening all right.

ALANZO

You see? Where ever I went in search of my long lost twin brother, men avoided me like the plague--because I terrified them so. I don't know what it is about me, but I was born fierce. But you, you have nothing to be frightened of my little plum.

(He pinches ARGENTINA'S cheek.)

POLICHINELLE

(To audience)

I love plums.

ALANZO

I repeat, you have nothing to fear. Those who live with me, and who serve my person, adorned as it is with so many laurels and signs of victory, live not in danger or fear; for wheresoever I am, risks, dangers, and fierce misfortunes flee and vanish.

(He gets closer and closer to ARGENTINA. She, however, is familiar with his kind, and having recognized him for what he is, draws away from him as he attempts to pull her onto his lap.)

ARGENTINA

That certainly is comforting. Now we all can have a happy time of it. I'll set the table inside and get your food.

ALANZO

Nonsense.

POLICHINELLE

(Aghast)

Nonsense?

ARGENTINA

Nonsense?

ALANZO

(With finality)

Nonsense! We'll eat out here.

POLICHINELLE

Out here? Why do you want to eat out here?

ALANZO

How can they

(Indicates the audience)

behold my grandeur if we go inside?

(To audience)

Isn't that right? Yes, I knew they'd agree.

(To ARGENTINA)

So set the table out here!

ARGENTINA

All right, but this is very irregular. Now, what is it you think you'd like to eat?

(She gets table cloth and utensils from the inn.)

POLICHINELLE

I know. I know--don't even have to think--I want...

ALANZO

Wait a minute.

POLICHINELLE

And I want...

ALANZO

Wait a minute!

POLICHINELLE

And I--I--I...

ALANZO

Just a Moment!

POLICHINELLE

I--I--I...
(He fades away.)

ALANZO

How many times have I told you, it is impolite to interrupt when someone else has the floor.

POLICHINELLE

(Confused, looks on the floor)
I'm sorry, I didn't know.

ALANZO

Now, sit down! I was just telling this little lady about my birth.

POLICHINELLE

Oh, no!

ALANZO

(Begins a patter song and dance and is later joined by POLICHINELLE and eventually by ARGENTINA. The table has been brought forward. ARGENTINA places the cloth upon it and CAPITANO snatches it off and uses it for a cape, which, of course, POLICHINELLE must carry. The entire description is full of vitality, with the CAPITANO marching and strutting up, down, and all around.)

When I was born upon this stage called earth,
 My birth was different from all other birth.
 They looked upon ma-ma's fantastic girth,
 And said, and said, this child will be of consequential
 worth!

POLICHINELLE

This child will be of influential worth?

ALANZO

Observe:

When other babies are born in the nude,
 And at that time have little aptitude,
 When I was born, I thought this rather crude,
 So, popped out in full armor, rainbow hues.

POLICHINELLE

He popped out in full armor, rainbow hues?

ARGENTINA

How'd this affect your mother's attitude?

ALANZO

I must admit she felt me rather rude.

ARGENTINA & POLICHINELLE

(To audience)

He must confess, she thought him somewhat crude.

ALANZO

Oh, I was an exceptional child,
 I was a magnificent child.
 When I was born, the Gods all smiled
 As they looked down, looked down, looked down,
 Looked down, on me.

Observe:

If other children pule and goo when born,
 Then other children do I greatly scorn,
 For like a lion I did roar that morn,
 And, furthermore, could blow a hunting horn.

POLICHINELLE

(Pantomimes blowing a horn)

Da, da, da, dum.

ARGENTINA & POLICHINELLE

He, furthermore, could blow a hunting horn.

ALANZO

Most babies are warm water washed and fed,
Then wrapped in swaddling bands and put to bed.
When I was born, I bathed in molten lead,
And clad in melted iron hot and red.

POLICHINELLE

Instead of milk, on hemlock juice he fed.

ALANZO

And for the deadly nightshade plant I pled.

ARGENTINA & POLICHINELLE

And for the deadly nightshade plant he pled.

Oh--

He was an exceptional child,

He was a remarkable child.

When he was born the Gods all smiled

As they looked down, looked down, looked down,

Looked down, on him.

ALANZO

If other children cry at once for feast,

The need for food in my concern was least.

I thought of nought, but killing man and beast,

And in my mind that thought has never ceased.

POLICHINELLE

He's dwelt on it in south, north, west, and east.

ALANZO

Accordingly my enemies decreased.

POLICHINELLE

(To audience)

Accordingly his foes are all deceased!

ALANZO

Oh, I am an exceptional man,

I am a magnificent man.

When I grew up, the Gods all ran,

As they looked down, looked down,

Looked down, looked down, on me!

ARGENTINA

(Exaggerating)

My, what a grand tale.

ALANZO

Tale? It's true. I have killed thousands in a single day. Polichinelle, have I not in a single day killed thousands?

POLICHINELLE

(He swings at the air.)

Flies!

ALANZO

What!

POLICHINELLE

I--I say, there are so many flies buzzing around.

ALANZO

Oh, bother the flies! How many have I killed in a single day?

POLICHINELLE

As I said--

(He appears to have caught a fly. He pantomimes picking it apart and eating it with great relish.)

Thousands.

ALANZO

Thousands, you see? Now, tell her of my great virility.

POLICHINELLE

Now?

ALANZO

Yes now.

POLICHINELLE

If I do, then can we eat?

ALANZO

Yes.

POLICHINELLE

If I do, then can I order anything I want?

ALANZO

Tell the story well, and you can.

POLICHINELLE

Well, if I must, I must.

(To ARGENTINA)

Did you know that it was once the Capitano's custom to wear no shirt?

ARGENTINA

(Not impressed)

Well?

ALANZO

Ask him why that was.

ARGENTINA

(Bored)

Why was that?

POLICHINELLE

Because, then, being an exceedingly fierce and violent man...

ALANZO

I have since calmed down.

POLICHINELLE

Being of an extremely furious nature, the hair which covered his body, which was in goodly quantity...

ALANZO

Excessively abundant.

POLICHINELLE

(To CAPITANO)

Who's telling this anyway?

(To ARGENTINA)

I repeat, that hair, when ever he was made angry, stood on end, and put so many holes in his shirt...

ALANZO

That one might have taken it for a colander.

POLICHINELLE

A veritable seive.

ALANZO

But, as I've said, having become much more moderate since then, I now wear underclothing like any other fellow. Are you impressed?

ARGENTINA

Oh, yes.

(Unenthusiastically)
I'm impressed.

POLICHINELLE
Did I tell it all right?

ALANZO
Beautifully. As long as you keep up the good work you'll never need look for another job.

POLICHINELLE
And now to eat. All right?

ALANZO
Proceed.

POLICHINELLE
Finally! Let's see--

(ARGENTINA has a waitress'es pad and makes notations as POLICHINELLE alternately sings and speaks his choice of foods.)

I'd like some Menistrone soup,
Some ravioli rich,
A juicy soft ripe cantaloupe--
No! Stop there! Make a switch!
Instead of melon, bring me pie--
The fruit and pizza kind,
With pepperoni, mushrooms, sauce,
And all the cheese you find.

Throw in lots'a Mazzarella,
Provolone, don't neglect,
I'm a fully famished fella,
And will never food reject!

What's more--
I'd like some plump, round sausages,
Perhaps a tender grouse,
Eighteen salami sandwiches...

ALANZO
(Crying out)
This isn't on the house!

POLICHINELLE
I'll have three dozen fresh baked buns,
Some garlic buttered bread,

Five jugs of ale--no cross that off--
Just bring me wine, instead!

ALANZO

Wait just a minute.

(By this time ARGENTINA has gone into the inn. She soon returns with a large tray of food.)

POLICHINELLE

(He stops his order suddenly)

Yes?

ALANZO

Thank you.

POLICHINELLE

You're welcome.

ALANZO

I hate to interrupt you, just when you seem to be getting warmed up, but may I give you a word of advice?

POLICHINELLE

One word?

ALANZO

Well...

POLICHINELLE

I thought so. What is it?

ALANZO

(During the advice Alanzo sings, POLICHINELLE is seated at the table. Just as ARGENTINA serves him the various dishes from one side, and he is about to "dive in," the CAPITANO removes them from the other.)

ALANZO

I would advise you to watch your weight,
Before it is too late, before it is too late.
I would suggest, you check the scale,
And without fail, your appetite curtail.
For if you don't, the food you eat,
Will cause a bulging belly and a swollen seat.
So--heed my advice, before it is too late,
And watch your weight!

Your appetite's incredible.
 You'd swallow all that's edible.
 You've got to stop this savoring
 Of everything with flavoring;
 And anything that's drinkable
 You've got to say's unthinkable,
 For all that's gastronomical
 Will bulge your anatomical
 Construction.

You've got to have a wariness
 For dishes omnifarious.
 A gluttonous vulgarian
 Is not a dietarian.
 A high caloric cranium
 Has never struck uranium.
 So--loose this vast obsession
 And eat meals with discretion.
 Think of your stomach cankering
 Whene'er you have a hankering for
 Food.

ALANZO & ARGENTINA

We would advise you to watch your weight,
 Before it is too late, before it is too late.
 We would suggest, you check the scale,
 And without fail, your appetite curtail.
 For if you don't, the food you eat,
 Will cause a bulging belly and a swollen seat.
 So--heed our advice, before it is too late,
 And watch your weight!

POLICHINELLE

Is it really my welfare or your purse we're looking after?

ALANZO

Your welfare, of course. How could you think such a base
 thing of me, when you as my financial secretary keep com-
 plete tally of my treasury. My only intention's to decrease
 your dimensions.

POLICHINELLE

But, I'm hungry.

ALANZO

Hungry, smugry. All you want to do is eat, eat, eat.

POLICHINELLE

I can't think of anything better to do.

ALANZO

And then, everything you eat goes to waist. What you have got to do is diet.

POLICHINELLE

I don't want to diet.

ALANZO

Just try it. Order but one dish of the food you like best. Reduce and economize--economize and reduce!

POLICHINELLE

But I was saving the dish I like best for last. I wanted to save it.

ALANZO

Well, don't.

POLICHINELLE

All right.

(To ARGENTINA)

I'll have a mountain of---

(He indicates a huge amount, but the CAPI-
TANO shakes his head.)

No?

ALANZO

No.

POLICHINELLE

A heap of--

(Same only a smaller gesture)

No?

ALANZO

No.

POLICHINELLE

A mound of--

(A small gesture)

No?

ALANZO

No.

POLICHINELLE

(Crestfallen)

An ordinary dish of

(With rapture anyway)

Spaghetti.

(ARGENTINA shrugs and goes in for the spaghetti.)

ALANZO

And remember, just one dish.

POLICHINELLE

Just one?

ALANZO

One! That's all. I'll just take all this other food inside. It wouldn't do to let it spoil, and then have to pay for it.

(CAPITANO passes ARGENTINA as she enters with a dish of spaghetti.)

Argentina, see that he gets no more than that one dish. We've got to help him fight the battle of the bulge.
(He exits.)

ARGENTINA

Yes, Capitano.

(She serves the spaghetti and POLICHINELLE digs in ravenously. He delicately lifts each strand over his head and adroitly lowers it into his cavernous mouth. As she goes about her work she sings and hums the following speech to the audience.)

Dum-de-dum, da-dum. I've got an idea. Maybe Isabella's man-catching advice might work--and here's a man. A man?
(She gives him a quick once over.)

Oh, well, I guess he'll do. Da, dee, dumm-dum. Oh, Polichinelle?

POLICHINELLE

(Eating)

Hummm?

ARGENTINA

Do you find me attractive?

POLICHINELLE

Oh, you're all right--slurp--slurp--I suppose--slurp--slurp--as women go--slurp--slurp.

ARGENTINA

Would you like to make love to me?

POLICHINELLE

Not especially--slurp.

ARGENTINA

Why not?

POLICHINELLE

It 'ud be a waste of time--slurp--and besides I'm eating.

ARGENTINA

But, if I made it worth your while?

POLICHINELLE

(Stops eating and looks at her)

I'm listening?

ARGENTINA

Well, I could give you a kiss.

POLICHINELLE

You've got to do better than that.

(Begins eating again)

ARGENTINA

How about a hug, and a squeeze thrown in?

POLICHINELLE

No, I don't think so--slurp--slurp.

ARGENTINA

Well, it's against my principles, but, if you'd keep it a deep, dark, secret...

POLICHINELLE

Yes?

ARGENTINA

And not tell a soul I had offered, or even suggest that I would compromise or violate my standards...

POLICHINELLE

Yes?

ARGENTINA

Because I want you to know, I've never done this before.

POLICHINELLE

You haven't?

ARGENTINA

No. And if Mr. Pantalone, my master, knew I'd offered he'd probably fire me.

POLICHINELLE

He would?

ARGENTINA

Yes. So if I do this for you, you must do everything I say.

POLICHINELLE

(Dubiously)

Well...

ARGENTINA

If I do as I say--if I sneak in and get you all the spaghetti you can eat, will you?

POLICHINELLE

It's a deal!

ARGENTINA

Good. Now, you've got to look on me as the only thing in the world.

POLICHINELLE

Except for food.

ARGENTINA

All right--except for food. You've got to...

PANTALONE

(Enters greatly excited)

Argentina, where have you been? Your mistress, my daughter, Flaminia--I think--I think she's dying--of a broken heart.

POLICHINELLE

Is that possible--for Capitano?

ARGENTINA

(To POLICHINELLE)

No, for Mario. It's possible.

PANTALONE

(To ARGENTINA)

I want you to run over to Dr. Gratiano's and tell him to come right away. But find out how much he'll charge first. It's bound to be too much, so make him lower the price, and if it's still too much, tell him we don't want him at all.

ARGENTINA

But, sir...

PANTALONE

And if he should ask, tell him I don't forgive him for a single thing he said about me this morning. Now hurry...
(He returns to the inn.)

ARGENTINA

Come on, Polichinelle.

POLICHINELLE

Can I bring my spaghetti?

ARGENTINA

All right, but hurry. Remember our bargain.

POLICHINELLE

My stomach won't let me forget.

ARGENTINA

I hope the Doctor's home. Now if Virginio opens the door, remember to be very loving.

(She has by now reached the other side of the stage with POLICHINELLE. She knocks.)

Remember now.

POLICHINELLE

All right.

(VIRGINIO answers the summons.)

ARGENTINA

Why, hello, Virginio. Polichinelle, dear, have you met Virginio? Virginio, this is Capitano Alanzo Spavento's famous servant, Polichinelle.

(POLICHINELLE bows.)

VIRGINIO

Polichinelle, "dear"?

ARGENTINA

Yes, isn't he the sweetest thing?

(Aside to POLICHINELLE as he continues eating.)

Remember your promise.

POLICHINELLE

Oh yes, Argentina, dear--do hurry and deliver your message so we can get back to the inn.

ARGENTINA

(Aside to POLICHINELLE)

That's better.

(To VIRGINIO)

Ah, yes. We have so much to talk about and do.

VIRGINIO

Talk about? Do?

ARGENTINA

Yes. Polichinelle has had such great adventures, and I could just sit and listen to him tell about them for hours.

VIRGINIO

Hours?

ARGENTINA

I love the way he tells them.

(She pokes POLICHINELLE.)

POLICHINELLE

Ah--ah--and I just love the way she listens.

(Aside to ARGENTINA)

Deliver your message.

ARGENTINA

Oh, yes. Here I am being so selfish, thinking about myself when my poor mistress, for all I know, is dying.

VIRGINIO

Flaminia?

ARGENTINA

(Nods)

Of a broken heart.

POLICHINELLE

(Still trying to convince himself)

It's possible.

ARGENTINA

We must have the Doctor immediately.

POLICHINELLE

Provided he won't charge too much.

(To ARGENTINA)

Let's go.

ARGENTINA

(To POLICHINELLE)

Quiet! I mean, all right Polci dearest.

VIRGINIO

"Polci dearest?"

ARGENTINA

The sooner we get back and help take care of Flaminia, and give the Capitano his dinner, the sooner she'll be well, the sooner we'll have more time--alone.

POLICHINELLE

By ourselves, in the kitchen.

VIRGINIO

Alone? In the kitchen?

ARGENTINA

Well, good-bye Virginio. Tell the Doctor right away. I probably won't see you very often anymore, so--bye.

(POLICHINELLE and ARGENTINA leave arm in arm, crossing toward PANTALONE'S Inn. With only one arm free POLICHINELLE finds it rather difficult to consume the last few strands of his spaghetti. They soon are out of sight, leaving VIRGINIO alone and miserable on stage.)

VIRGINIO

But--but--Wait a minute! Oh, oh--how miserable I am. Now what am I going to do? Oh, unhappy me!

(The following scene is played with a great variety in voice, gesture, and total body movement.)

Have I lost my only love, Argentina? It was my own fault! I never told her that I loved her. I was working up courage though. How shall I be able to live without her? I would rather die first. Curses on Capitano for returning with Polichinelle. That idiot Polichinelle. What has he got that I haven't?

(He examines himself carefully, and finally pulls out his empty pockets.)

Except maybe money. If I were the Capitano, I wouldn't let any dumb servant take care of my money. Polichinelle flashes it around as if it were his own. Gee, if I had money--No, I'd have to have courage too. All I need is money and courage. Oh, inconstant Argentina. Oh, wretched Virginio! Let me die, then, and it shall be recorded in ancient and modern history: Virginio died for Argentina. I shall go to my room, tie a rope to the crossbeam, climb upon a chair, place the rope around my neck, kick away the chair, and ugh!

(He pantomimes this action in imitating a man being hanged, and gags as if choked.)

I'm hanged. It's done quickly; nothing can stop me! Now for the gallows--

(He does a take, and begins talking to himself.)

The gallows did I say? Oh, Virginio, what are you thinking of? It would be foolishness to kill yourself for a girl. Yes, sir, it's a low down trick for a girl to betray an honest man. Agreed. But when you are hanged, will you be any fatter for it? No, I'll be thinner, and I wish to have a fine figure. Not like that paunchy Polichinelle. Well, what do you say? If you want to be present at the hanging, all you have to do is come. Hymp! To that I say, no, and you aren't going either. Oh, yes I am. Oh, no you're not. I am, I tell you.

(He picks up a stick and strikes himself with it.)

Ha, ha! There now, I am rid of that meddler, at last. Now, there's nobody to stop me; I'm off to the hanging.

(He starts to go, then stops short.)

No, hanging is an ordinary death; it's a death that can be seen any day, and I wouldn't get much honour from it. Let me see.

(He sits.)

Some unusual sort of death, an historic death, a Virginionic death--

(He jumps up.)

I have it! I'll stop up my nose and mouth so that no air can escape, and then I can die. Now--

(He stops up his nose and mouth with his hands. He turns red, his cheeks bulge and there is a hissing sound as of air escaping.)

It's no use. The air goes out through my ears; and besides it's not worth the trouble. I didn't know it was so difficult to die.

(To audience)

You you know, you're not helping any. You could, you know--help me, I mean. If just one of you would come up here and die first, simply to show me how, I'd be very much obliged. No? Well, some people just aren't very co-operative. I've got it! We read stories about how people die from laughing--I'm very ticklish. If I were to be tickled for any length of time, I should probably die of laughing. I'll just tickle myself, and then I can die easily enough.

(He begins to tickle himself, laughs,
and falls to the the ground. MARIO
enters.)

MARIO

Virginio, Virginio! What's the matter? Have you been drinking again? Just when I need you most, you're useless to me.

VIRGINIO

(Stops, stands up, and salutes.)

Sir, I have not been drinking,

(Hiccups)

except from the draught of love. Ohhh.

(He begins to wail and puts his head on

MARIO'S shoulder to sob.)

Argentina has found someone else. Ohhh.

MARIO

There, there, Virginio. Wait a minute. It's you should be comforting me. I'm without my love, too, you know. I can't even get in to see Flaminia to find out what I didn't do, or what I did do and shouldn't have.

VIRGINIO

(Whimpering)

Flaminia? You won't be kept out much longer. Soon it'll be all over.

MARIO

All over?

VIRGINIO

Yes, Soon she'll be dead, and better off that way. Dead of a broken heart.

(He wails.)

MARIO

Virginio! Stop that noise and tell me what's happened.

VIRGINIO

All I know is that Argentina came here
(In disgust)
with Polichinelle, for the Doctor, because she said Flaminia
was pining away over her lost love.

MARIO

That's me. I've got to see her!

VIRGINIO

You just said she won't let you in.

MARIO

(Thinking)
That's so--I have it!

VIRGINIO

What?

MARIO

She won't let me in as me. But, if I weren't me, maybe
she'd let me in.

VIRGINIO

Huh?

MARIO

If I weren't me, I could get in, see?

VIRGINIO

But let's face it, you are you.

MARIO

I could pretend not to be.

VIRGINIO

Pretend not to be who?

MARIO

Me! Don't you see?

VIRGINIO

No.

MARIO

Who could I be?

VIRGINIO

I give up, who? But no matter who you choose, I don't
think your father will approve.

MARIO

My father--that's it. Virginio, you're a genius. I'll be my father. Meet Doctor Gratiano
(He bows.)

VIRGINIO

(Scratches his head, bewildered)
Huh? Where, where?

MARIO

Here, me!

VIRGINIO

Are you sure you haven't been drinking?

MARIO

Now, listen carefully. If I put on my father's clothes, and pretend to be him, they'll let me in to see Flaminia, because they sent for the Doctor, my father, who I'll be-- see?

VIRGINIO

Oh. Why didn't you say so before. It's very simple, as any fool can plainly see. But, Argentina's mother always used to say, "Don't try to be anything you're not." I don't think it'll work.

MARIO

Of course it'll work. Come upstairs and help me change clothes.

(They ascend to a higher platform left stage.)

VIRGINIO

But, you don't know anything about medicine.
(They pause half-way up.)

MARIO

That's true. I've got it again. I'll ask father. He'll tell me all I need to know. Come on. Father, father!

VIRGINIO

(Also calling)
Dr. Gratiano!

(Light fills the interior of a room upstairs in the Doctor's house. It is very simply furnished with a couch, small table, stool, and a few books, bottles, and general alchemical supplies. The DOCTOR is reclin-

ing on the couch, and from his snoring appears to be asleep. MARIO and VIRGINIO enter. MARIO shakes the DOCTOR.)

MARIO

Father, wake up!

GRATIANO

Wha--What?

MARIO

Father, I have decided to become a Doctor, just like you. How long will it take to teach me?

GRATIANO

(Pleased)

A doctor like me? Well, well, well, my son. Finally you have seen the light and have chosen an honorable profession. It does my heart good to know that.

VIRGINIO

Can you teach him fast? Right away?

GRATIANO

A doctor. Well, well. To know that my offspring will carry on my work and tradition. The name of Gratiano will become famous in the medical profession. And I know you will practice medicine out of pure love for it just like I do.

(He sings.)

It gives me pleasure to cure the sick.
It makes me happy, disease to lick.
I am so joyful, it is no trick,
To cure the sick.

VIRGINIO

It's simple as arithmetic?

MARIO

To cure the sick?

GRATIANO

How I love to saw and slash,
Slice and split, cut and smash,
Oh, what fun to dislocate,
To trim and tear, dissect and break.
Oh, what bliss to operate,
And cure the sick.

It makes me merry to extract,
 A rotted tooth, a limb that's cracked.
 To nurse, to purge, and counteract,
 And halt disease where it's attacked,
 So no one else will same contract,
 When I cure the sick.

VIRGINIO

The patient's seldom left intact.

MARIO & VIRGINIO

When he cures the sick.
 (The song ends.)

VIRGINIO

Yes, we know, you're a veritable avalanche of medicine,
 but...

GRATIANO

I am not only an avalanche of medicine, but the bane of
 all maladies whatsoever. I exterminate all fevers and
 chills, measles, tonsilitus, the plague, ringworm, gout,
 apoplexy, gravel, rheumatism, pleurisy, catarrh, both
 wind-colic, and ordinary colic, without counting those
 serious and light illnesses which bear the same name. In
 short, I wage such cruel and relentless warfare against all
 forms of illness that when I see a disorder becoming inera-
 dicable in a patient, I even go so far as to kill the pa-
 tient in order to relieve him of his disorder.

VIRGINIO

That seems like an excellent cure.

GRATIANO

I know no other better.

MARIO

But, tell me how you go about your cures.

VIRGINIO

Just give us the simple facts, without any embroidery.

MARIO

Suppose I were to set up as a doctor, what...

GRATIANO

Then, if fortune smiled upon you, you'd soon become rich.
 Consider how much I have earned since it has become fashion-
 able to treat the gout. I have amassed more than two

thousand ducats on that ailment alone, and confidentially, I know no more about the gout than does Virginio.

VIRGINIO

Then that must be very little, for I don't know a thing.

MARIO

And I know as much as he does.

GRATIANO

Exactly, but that shouldn't hinder you from becoming a clever doctor. It is not knowledge that makes a successful doctor, it is his impudence and wordiness.

MARIO

But, how then, exactly, do you manage your patients?

GRATIANO

It's very simple. I begin first by having a mule, and promenading through the streets on it. Suddenly from nowhere comes a man who says, "Doctor, Doctor, please come and see my parent who is ill."

"Certainly, sir," I reply. The man goes ahead and I follow on the mule.

(The DOCTOR imitates the man walking.

He turns around and says to VIRGINIO who has trotted after him)

What are you doing?

VIRGINIO

I'm playing the mule.

GRATIANO

Oh, well, anyway, I arrive at the house of the sick parent. My guide knocks.

(VIRGINIO knocks.)

The door is opened. I alight from my mule; and together we ascend the stairs.

VIRGINIO

You and the mule? Does the mule also climb the stairs?

GRATIANO

No, no, no! The mule remains at the door. It is the guide and myself who mount the stairs.

VIRGINIO

Oh.

GRATIANO

Now, we are at the patient's bedroom.

VIRGINIO

We are?

GRATIANO

Yes. My guide says, "Follow me. I'm going to see if my parent is asleep."

(The DOCTOR walks on tiptoes, stretches out his arms, and pretends to draw aside the curtains of a bed.)

VIRGINIO

Why does he step so softly?

MARIO

(Whispering)

On account of the sick man.

GRATIANO

We are now beside his bed.

VIRGINIO

That was fast.

MARIO

Virginio, lie down and pretend you're the patient.

VIRGINIO

All right.

(He lies down.)

MARIO

(In a normal voice)

Doctor, the patient is not asleep.

VIRGINIO

Don't shout, I'm sick.

MARIO

You may approach, Doctor.

GRATIANO

Thank you. Immediately I take a seat by the bedside, and I say to the patient, "Show me your tongue."

VIRGINIO

(Puts out his tongue)

Aaaah!

(He moans.)

Oh, sir, I am very sick. Aaaah!

GRATIANO

(Examines tongue)

Eh, hmmm. What an unusual illness.

MARIO

That tongue is very wet.

GRATIANO

Oh my, yes. A sage observation. You'll learn fast, I can see. Now back to the patient. We'd better dry that tongue off, don't you think so?

(He stuffs a towel in VIRGINIO'S mouth.)

VIRGINIO

Mmmmmph...

GRATIANO

The patient has become delirious. His speech is failing him.

MARIO

Utter incoherence.

GRATIANO

Let us feel the pulse.

(They each take one of VIRGINIO'S hands.)

MARIO & GRATIANO

(Alternating thumps)

Bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum,

MARIO

Bum, diddy, bum, bum,

GRATIANO

Bum, bum.

MARIO

The pulse is very irregular.

GRATIANO

The poor chap's not long for this world, with such a fever.

MARIO

Fever? How did you discover that Doctor?

GRATIANO

I'll show you. When the pulse is equal, that is to say, when it goes bum, bum, bum, there is no fever, but when it is intermittent and when it goes quickly--bum, diddy, diddy; bum, diddy, diddy; there is a fever.

MARIO

Now, that's quite simple, bum, bum, bum, no fever; bum, diddy, diddy; bum, diddy, diddy, fever.

GRATIANO

Yes. And just listen to this fellow bum, diddy, diddying.

MARIO

My, my.

GRATIANO

Then, of course, you can always tell the degree of the sickness by feeling the stomach.

(He pushes in VIRGINIO'S stomach.)

MARIO

How interesting.

(He, too, pushes.)

VIRGINIO

Mpf! Mpf!

GRATIANO

Tsk! Tsk!

MARIO

What is your diagnosis, Doctor?

GRATIANO

Well, Doctor, I would say that he has a--a--a dreadful disease.

MARIO

Yes, Doctor, I would tend to agree with that.

GRATIANO

Good!

MARIO

What would you prescribe?

GRATIANO

Of course, we could operate.

(He picks up a knife from the table.)

VIRGINIO

Eeeenf!

GRATIANO

But, I haven't time for that now.

(He puts it down again.)

I have other, more important business to attend to--I have it. Since you, Mario, are now well versed in the medical profession, why don't you prescribe a cure in the true sanatory tradition.

MARIO

All right. Do you think the patient's tongue is dry enough yet?

GRATIANO

Quite possibly. I'll remove the cloth.

VIRGINIO

Ugh!

MARIO

Fine. Now, since the speech is effected it is obvious that the trouble lies in the mouth, and stems from the teeth. Let me have a paper, pen, and ink.

(He writes.)

Prescription RX: This evening a lavament, tomorrow morning a blood letting, tomorrow evening extraction of all teeth.

(The prescription is pantomimed by GRATIANO and VIRGINIO as it is written. VIRGINIO wails appropriately.)

MARIO

(To GRATIANO)

How was that?

GRATIANO

Excellent, excellent! But, you're forgetting the best part.

VIRGINIO

Oh, no!

MARIO

What's that?

GRATIANO

You must tell your guide to take a ripe apple, cut it into four equal parts and put them in the patient's mouth. Then instruct him to put the patient's head into the oven and before the apple is baked, the ailment will be gone.

MARIO

How could I have forgotten that?

(He pulls from his pocket an apple.)

VIRGINIO

Now wait a minute! Don't get carried away.

MARIO

All right. Now the examination's over.

VIRGINIO

Thank goodness.

MARIO

Now what do I do?

GRATIANO

Now you take your leave of the patient, and depart saying, "Sir, tomorrow I shall come at the same hour."

VIRGINIO

Over my dead body!

GRATIANO

Yes--And I hope in a short time to restore you completely to health.

VIRGINIO

Not if I can help it!

GRATIANO

Then the man who has introduced you reconducts you again, and slips a golden ducat into your hand. You mount your mule once more and are off.

MARIO

Wonderful!

GRATIANO

Then, if you just supplement your regular conversation with

such sage remarks as, "One who does not hear may be called deaf," everyone is sure to recognize you as a doctor.

MARIO

How's this? Ah--ah--"He who does not speak might be considered mute."

GRATIANO

Excellent, excellent. You've learned almost as fast as I did. Now that you have the knowledge, go out and do good with it. Remember to keep busy, for as I have always said, "A sleeping doctor cannot be said to be awake."

MARIO

I must remember that.

VIRGINIO

And don't forget, "He who lies down with dogs gets up with fleas."

(He rises and scratches himself.)

GRATIANO

Indeed, that's what I've always said. And speaking of dogs and fleas, do you happen to know if the Capitano and his servant are still at Isabella's?

VIRGINIO

(Sadly)

I happen to know that they are at Pantalone's Inn, and will probably be there for quite a while

GRATIANO

Oh? Then Isabella must be alone. In that case, if you'll excuse me, I believe I'll make a house call. Remember now, "A rolling carcass gathers no flies."

VIRGINIO

They certainly are plentiful this year.

MARIO

What's that?

VIRGINIO

Flies!

(He swings at a fly.)

MARIO

(Looking after his father.)

Is he gone? Now quickly, Virginio, help me into these

clothes.

(He puts on the Doctor's garb.)

Now, while I'm at Pantalone's you keep your eyes open.

VIRGINIO

Yes, sir.

MARIO

My father's almost certainly going to Isabella's. Be sure you keep him there at any cost.

VIRGINIO

Yes sir. At any cost?

MARIO

At any cost! I wouldn't want him waltzing into the inn while I was there. It'd ruin everything. Is that clear?

VIRGINIO

Yes sir. And if you see Argentina, you might put in a good word for me too, sir, if it's not too late.

MARIO

All right I'll do what I can. There, how do I look?

VIRGINIO

Fine. Just like the old block.

MARIO

Great. Then I'm off.

VIRGINIO

Wait!

MARIO

What?

VIRGINIO

You haven't a mule--but then I guess you'll get along without one. Good luck, Mario.

MARIO

Not Mario, I'm Doctor Gratiano. Farewell!
(He is on his way with a flourish, and
the lights fade as scene one comes to
a close and

THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT II

SCENE 11

(A few moments have elapsed since MARIO has left his home to pay a call on FLAMINIA.)

MARIO

I've got to have courage and convince myself that I am the real Dr. Gratiano. To me sickness is a joy--a joy!

(He imitates his father as he begins to ascend the stairs on stage right that lead to FLAMINIA'S room.)

It gives me pleasure to cure the sick.

It makes me happy disease to lick.

I am so joyful. It is no trick

To cure the sick.

It's simple as arithmetic,

To cure the sick!

It makes me merry to extract

A rotted tooth, a limb that's cracked,

To nurse, to purge, and counteract,

And halt disease where it's attacked,

So no one else will same contract,

When I cure the sick!

I hope the patient's left intact

When I cure the sick.

(He knocks at FLAMINIA'S door. As the lights come on they reveal a rather small room simply furnished with a bed, a nightstand, chair, stool, and a few feminine garments here and there. ARGENTINA comes to the door.)

ARGENTINA

Oh, Dr. Gratiano, I thought you'd never get here. Poor Flaminia is near death. I'm afraid I didn't realize she

was so sick.

(She gestures as if to brush flies away.)

These pesky flies aren't helping matters any either. I'm going mad shooping them away. They're all over, and there's one in particular that's been following me.

MARIO

(As far as possible in the voice of his father.)

You've done an admirable job my child. And now if you'd like to help me even further...

ARGENTINA

Oh, yes, anything you say.

MARIO

Go down to the kitchen, and on the stove put the largest pot you can find.

ARGENTINA

Pot?

MARIO

Then fill it with ice water. When this comes to a boil, put three and one half cups in a basin and fill the rest of the basin with ice. Bring it to me immediately, but remember, knock before you enter, because as I have always said, "One who is sleeping cannot be said to be awake!"

ARGENTINA

I understand.

(She begins to go.)

You know, my mother always used to say that too.

MARIO

Hurry along now.

(ARGENTINA exits, and MARIO turns to FLAMINIA who is lying silently in the bed.)

Ah, Flaminia, my lov--patient--I see you are awake. At last, I have arrived to cure you of this dread disease.

FLAMINIA

Oh, Doctor, I am dying of a broken heart.

MARIO

Let me be the judge of that my dear. When did you first feel this malady come upon you?

FLAMINIA

When I found out my love, Mario, was untrue to me. Ohhh, his name the mere mention of his name sends arrows through my heart. Here see how my little hand is quivering, and my pulse is jumping.

MARIO

Oh, my yes. Bum, diddy, diddy; bum, diddy, diddy. My dear, you have a fever.

FLAMINIA

Just as I told you Doctor.

MARIO

Doctor? Oh, yes, quite. Doctor!

FLAMINIA

And feel, Doctor, feel how my poor heart is pounding, ready to burst its frail shell.

(She takes his hand and puts it upon her heart.)

MARIO

I, I, I yi, yi! Yes, yes indeed, it
(Gulp)
pounds.

FLAMINIA

Life without my love is not worth living.

MARIO

My dear child, I speak to you now as a father. How can you believe that my son has been untrue to you?

FLAMINIA

I have seen enough to know it is true.

MARIO

Please believe me when I tell you, I know Mario better than anyone else, anyone else in the world. And I know that he is faithful to you. He is, in fact, pining away at this moment because he has lost you and doesn't know why; because he cannot take you in his arms and press you close to him. Can you believe that he is anxious to let your soul depart from him? What joy could be joy, what delight could be delight for him without you?

FLAMINIA

Oh, Doctor, if what you say were only true...

MARIO

It is my dear, it is.

FLAMINIA

Just talking to you, you remind me of him, and I do feel better.

MARIO

(Sings)

Please believe me when I tell you
That your love is true--
That he loves you, always loved you,
And he thought you knew
That he loved you, deeply loves you,
No one else but you.

He looks on your face,
He looks in your eyes,
He basks in your smile
As it brightens the skies,
He loves you, he loves you!
How can you doubt?
Please don't continue to keep your love out.

He presses your hand,
He kisses your cheek,
A love bond is built,
Though neither can speak,
He loves you. He loves you!
How can you doubt?
Please don't continue to keep your love out!

Please believe me when I tell you
That your love is true--
That he loves you, always loved you,
And he thought you knew
That he loved you, deeply loves you,
No one else but you.

FLAMINIA

Oh, Doctor, I do want to believe it. If only I could be sure.

ARGENTINA

(Rapping loudly)

Doctor, Doctor, I've got the water.

MARIO

(To himself)

So soon?

(To ARGENTINA)

Never mind, I won't...

FLAMINIA

Come in Argentina. I feel much better.

ARGENTINA

Wonderful. Oh, Doctor, I decided to start with ice water and not bother boiling it first, so...

MARIO

I thought so.

FLAMINIA

(To ARGENTINA)

I've almost decided that I judged Mario too quickly...

ARGENTINA

(She stops short.)

Shhh. Quiet. I'll get that fly yet. I hate being followed by a fly. There he goes.

(They all follow the flight of the fly.

Finally he lights on MARIO'S head.)

Don't move Doctor, he's on your head. I'll just--

(She swings the basin and hits MARIO on the head with it. The ice water drenches him, he yowls, and the disguise is lost.)

I got him. No more fly.

(FLAMINIA and ARGENTINA recognize MARIO and simultaneously cry.)

Mario!

MARIO

Now, wait! I can explain everything.

FLAMINIA

So it's you, you, you! How could you, how could you come here and do this to me?

MARIO

Well, I...

ARGENTINA

How could you come here and do this to her?

MARIO

I...

FLAMINIA

Come here to mock me, to scoff at my sickness--I hate you!

ARGENTINA

To scoff at her sickness, she despises you!

FLAMINIA

(To ARGENTINA)

You keep out of this.

MARIO

(To FLAMINIA)

But I love you!

FLAMINIA

A fine way of showing it!

MARIO

I do!

FLAMINIA

You couldn't and do this to me!

MARIO

But, I do!

FLAMINIA

You don't!

MARIO

I do!

FLAMINIA

You don't!

MARIO

I do!

FLAMINIA

You don't!

MARIO

(Angered, enough is enough.)

All right, I don't! Now go ahead and cry.

FLAMINIA

(To audience)

You see? Now he admits it!

(To MARIO)

Why should I cry?

(ARGENTINA'S head has been going back and forth. As she watches the battle, she resembles a spectator at a fast tennis tournament.)

MARIO

All right then, don't!

(The following dialogue comes out so rapidly that it almost appears as if MARIO and FLAMINIA are speaking at the same time.)

FLAMINIA

The bonds

MARIO

The chains

FLAMINIA

that bind

MARIO

that fetter

FLAMINIA

this soul

MARIO

this heart

FLAMINIA

crack.

MARIO

burst.

FLAMINIA

The prey is relinquished.

MARIO

The slave is free.

Barbarian! FLAMINIA

Wretch! MARIO

What are you saying? FLAMINIA

What are you muttering? MARIO

I say, I detest you! FLAMINIA

I say, I abhor you! MARIO

And that I cannot endure the sight of you any more. FLAMINIA

And that I cannot bear to be with you any more. MARIO

Now I enjoy FLAMINIA

Now I am free MARIO

Liberty! FLAMINIA

from slavery! MARIO

I lash at a false impostor FLAMINIA

I scourge a deceptive damsel MARIO

who deluded me. FLAMINIA

who flouted me. MARIO

FLAMINIA

I am loose.

MARIO

I am free.

FLAMINIA

I am beyond servitude.

MARIO

I am beyond disturbance.

FLAMINIA

The knot is untied!

MARIO

The bond is burst!

FLAMINIA

Out of my sight you charlatan!

MARIO

Gladly, you, you wretch!
(He exits violently.)

ARGENTINA

(Steps forward and addresses the audience.)
I guess she told him all right, all right. You know where he's going now? Downstairs to drown his sorrows in a big bowl of spaghetti.

(The lights fade as the second scene concludes.)

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT II

SCENE 111

(While MARIO has been visiting FLAMINIA, GRATIANO has arrived at the home of ISABELLA. The scene opens with DR. GRATIANO center stage adjusting his cloak and ruff, humming his medical tune, and getting ready to pay a call on ISABELLA. There are two entrances that lead up to the main room of ISABELLA'S home. GRATIANO knocks at the right stage entrance. There is no answer. He knocks again. Suddenly a head appears at a window above him. It is ISABELLA.)

ISABELLA

(Sweetly)

Who is it?

GRATIANO

(Startled)

Uph! It's, it's I.

(He looks around, and finally discovers the whereabouts of the voice.)

I was wondering, dear lady, if you'd be so kind as to grant me a brief interview?

ISABELLA

Oh. Well, I'm so sorry Doctor, but I have the most dreadful headache, and I just don't think that I'm well enough to see anyone, unless it's urgent.

GRATIANO

But, this is urgent; and I could treat your headache while I'm with you.

ISABELLA

Well, it's very kind of you to offer, but you see my poor, dear kittens are sleeping and I wouldn't want to disturb them. They sleep so lightly, you know.

GRATIANO

(Whispering)

I could talk very softly.

ISABELLA

I surely appreciate your thoughtfulness, but I really don't feel up to it today, Doctor. Perhaps some other time. You understand, I'm sure, Doctor dear. You're so sweet and understanding, and you know better than anyone that rest is the best cure. So, bye, bye, now.

(She disappears.)

GRATIANO

Rats!

(He sings.)

Rats, rats, rats!

Those damnable, bothersome cats.

I wish they were dead. I wish that her head--

Were no longer aching! And that's

Not all that I wish--Oh rats!

What good's a new ruff or cravat?

I can't even get up to bat.

There's nought more perplexin'

Than downright rejection!

I shouldn've just stayed home and sat.

Drat, drat, drat,

I wanted to chat in her flat,

And outside I stand, I've no place to land,

Like a Noah without Ararat.

I wish that I knew where I'm at.

I wish that I knew. What'll I do?

What'll I do? Ohhh, drat!

Rats, rats, rats!

(He sits on a step.)

VIRGINIO

(Enters from the Doctor's house stage left. He crosses right toward the Doctor, but first addresses the audience.)

Mario said, keep him there at all costs. But once he gets inside, it'll be a long time before he leaves, if I know the Doctor--And as if I didn't have enough to worry about with my own problems. Where am I going to get the courage; where am I going to get the money, to win Argentina?

(He sees the DOCTOR sitting dejected.)

Oh, oh. Doctor, what are you doing out here?

GRATIANO

She won't see me. Her cats are sleeping.

VIRGINIO

What, what are you going to do?

GRATIANO

Oh, I don't know. Probably get something to eat at Pantalone's...

VIRGINIO

To eat? Oh, no! You can't do that.

(To audience)

He can't do that.

GRATIANO

Why not?

VIRGINIO

Food's very indigestible.

GRATIANO

It's never bothered me before.

VIRGINIO

It hasn't? There's always a first time you know, and besides, I hear they've raised the prices. That's it--it costs too much.

GRATIANO

Money's no object.

VIRGINIO

It isn't?

GRATIANO

No.

VIRGINIO

(To audience)

Keep him here at all costs he said. Money's no object he said. If that's the case...

GRATIANO

What are you muttering about?

VIRGINIO

Oh, I was just thinking. How much would it be worth to you if I could get you in to see Isabella?

GRATIANO

Oh, about--but you can't...

VIRGINIO

But if I could, would it be worth five ducats, say?

GRATIANO

Yes, I suppose so.

VIRGINIO

Then, if it's worth five, it must be worth ten.

GRATIANO

Now just hold on. It seems to me you're describing an impossibility.

VIRGINIO

Ten, agreed?

GRATIANO

Well, if I get in...

VIRGINIO

(Knocks)

Get close to the wall, Doctor. Don't let her see that you're still here.

ISABELLA

(Again at the window)

Who is it?

VIRGINIO

Me.

ISABELLA

Oh, Virginio, honey. What do you want?

VIRGINIO
I have ah, ah, message--ah--ah...

GRATIANO
(Prompting)
Of monumental magnitude...

VIRGINIO
of great importance...

GRATIANO
to transmit...

VIRGINIO
to deliver...

GRATIANO
from an elegant being...

VIRGINIO
from someone...

GRATIANO
who is passionately and hopelessly captivated by your
radiant beauty.

VIRGINIO
who loves you.

ISABELLA
How nice.

VIRGINIO
May I come up?

ISABELLA
Of course!
(She disappears again.)

GRATIANO
Well, I'll be...

VIRGINIO
You see? Now wait here. It won't be long before she'll
want to see you.

(He mounts the stairs and the room be-
comes illuminated. It is simply but

elegantly furnished with a couch, a table upon which lies a sword, a screen over which is draped one of ISABELLA'S gowns, and a few stools.)

Maybe my luck's beginning to turn. Maybe it is...
(He enters the room in which ISABELLA is sitting on the couch stroking PRITHWISH, the kitten, who has a bandaged paw.)

ISABELLA

Oh, Virginio, I certainly am glad you're here. Now what is the message?

VIRGINIO

I...

ISABELLA

No, don't tell me. I know.

VIRGINIO

You do?

ISABELLA

It's from Mario isn't it? He wants to sweep me away with him...

VIRGINIO

Mario? Mario has...

ISABELLA

I knew it. I was afraid that I was wrong, but how could I have doubted that he loved me as I love him. His kindness of this morning when he came so early to bandage my poor kitten's little old paw...

VIRGINIO

But he only came because his father wasn't in yet. You sounded so, so upset.

ISABELLA

Upset, upset? Well I was. After all there was blood! It was so noble of him, and I'm sure Prithwish is ever so grateful. Aren't you, Prithwish? He saved me then, and before the bandage was in place I knew I loved him, hopelessly, irretrievably...

VIRGINIO

You did?

ISABELLA

And then after saving me again from that jealous Flaminia hussy, I knew, I knew that he loved me.

VIRGINIO

You did?

ISABELLA

Now you've come to tell me he'll take me away from all this.

VIRGINIO

I did?

ISABELLA

And I have to get away without delay, for the Capitano, as you know, is back, and he's brought a--a--wedding gown.

VIRGINIO

So?

ISABELLA

He's even more repulsive than I remembered him. I was hoping I'd never see him again--but he's traced his long lost twin brother right back to this very town and he says, as soon as he finds him, the wedding will take place. Muriello, that's his brother is to be best man. So you all see, I've just got to leave. And Mario, dear Mario, once again has come to the rescue.

VIRGINIO

Well, ah--ah--don't you want to speak to his father first. Ah--he's waiting downstairs.

ISABELLA

(Collecting her things, and putting them into a wicker hamper)

Gracious no! I don't want to engage in another disagreeable conversation today. I've my bag all packed. I'll just take it and Prithwish, and go out the other door.

VIRGINIO

But, where'll you go?

ISABELLA

Is Mario at home now?

VIRGINIO

Well, ah--no.

ISABELLA

Then he'll probably be back soon; and since your house is the closest to the dock, I'll just go over there and wait for him.

(She begins to go.)

Oh, and Virginio, I'll always think you are the sweetest thing. Here are ten ducats for your trouble and for taking care of my cats while I'm away.

VIRGINIO

Well, well thank you.

ISABELLA

Bye now.

(She goes out by the left front entrance, thus avoiding the DOCTOR.)

VIRGINIO

Now what am I going to do? I have to keep the Doctor here.

(He goes to the head of the stairs.)

Oh, Doctor, Doctor Gratiano! Come on up.

GRATIANO

She'll see me? I didn't realize you had the gift of such persuasive power my boy.

VIRGINIO

I didn't...

GRATIANO

What?

VIRGINIO

I didn't--er--I didn't think so either.

GRATIANO

Hmmm--I see you have your coin purse out. You don't waste a moment do you? Well, here you are.

(He gives VIRGINIO ten ducats.)

You've earned them.

(He rubs his hands together.)

Now, where is she?

VIRGINIO

That's what I wanted to tell you.

GRATIANO

Well?

VIRGINIO

She said--she said she wanted to make herself extra beautiful for you--ha, ha, that's it--she's gone to do what women do--you know, ha, ha...

GRATIANO

(Pleased)

For me? Why she didn't have to go to all that trouble.

VIRGINIO

She said you should make yourself comfortable. She'll probably be--a little while. You know how women are--ha, ha--She's probably...

(There is a knock at the door below.)

GRATIANO

Who's that now?

VIRGINIO

(Peers out)

Oh, no. It's Mr. Pantalone.

GRATIANO

Now, what does he want, that imbecile, that old fool!

(To audience)

I've always been suspicious of him. All along--now this visit here is piquing my curiosity even more.

VIRGINIO

If we keep quiet, maybe he'll go away.

GRATIANO

But I want to know his intention in calling.

(He spies ISABELLA'S dress draped over the screen.)

I have it. If I remember correctly, Pantalone has extreme difficulty in perception.

VIRGINIO

You mean he can't see?

GRATIANO

I'll use a disguise. I'll pay him back for his insults of this morning.

VIRGINIO

Oh, no--not you too!

(To audience)

But it follows, he's the old block, the chip just beat him to the draw.

(To GRATIANO)

Who are you going to be?

GRATIANO

Isabella.

VIRGINIO

Isabella?

(To audience)

Now I've heard it all.

GRATIANO

You go down and delay Pantalone until I can don this habiliment. Then go find Isabella and detain her until you hear from me.

VIRGINIO

(To audience)

That shouldn't be difficult.

(PANTALONE knocks again.)

GRATIANO

Take care of him now!

VIRGINIO

With pleasure.

(He descends to PANTALONE'S level.)

Pantalone, sir. What a pleasant surprise! How are you?

PANTALONE

(Squinting without his glasses)

Who is it?

VIRGINIO

Why me, Virginio, of course.

PANTALONE

Virginio?

VIRGINIO

Yes. How are you?

PANTALONE

I did not come here to discuss my state of health; and what are you doing here?

VIRGINIO

Why, I--the Doctor sent me over to see if I could be of any service to Isabella. He does everything he can to help her.

PANTALONE

To bribe her, you mean.

VIRGINIO

What?

PANTALONE

To help her, indeed! Well, you just tell him--but never mind that now. You go up and tell Isabella that I want to see her.

VIRGINIO

Oh, I am sorry sir, but she gave me strict orders to see that she wasn't disturbed--unless, of course, it was something urgent.

PANTALONE

This is urgent!

VIRGINIO

I'm sorry sir, but...

PANTALONE

Doesn't my saying that it's urgent carry any weight with you?

VIRGINIO

I would say that your purse carries more weight with me than your voice.

PANTALONE

My purse?

VIRGINIO

Yes. Haven't you heard that money talks...

PANTALONE

Are you suggesting that...

VIRGINIO

You might consider it an investment, and...

PANTALONE

One ducat?

VIRGINIO

One ducat? A waste of time.

PANTALONE

Two?

VIRGINIO

It might as well be none.

PANTALONE

Two and one half?

VIRGINIO

Ten!

PANTALONE

Ten? Why that's as much as--I won't pay it!

VIRGINIO

Then I'm sorry.

(He begins to leave.)

PANTALONE

All right, all right--you thief. You might as well take my life's blood.

(He carefully counts out the money for

VIRGINIO.)

But for this, I see Isabella alone! I don't want you standing around, gawking.

VIRGINIO

I'll leave with pleasure, sir.

(To audience)

Although I'd like to see what happens.

(To PANTALONE)

Follow me.

(VIRGINIO goes up the stairs followed by PANTALONE. PANTALONE stops at the landing while VIRGINIO goes to the screen.)

Oh, Miss Puchiano, I hope you are not in a state of dishabille. You have a young, handsome gentleman caller.

GRATIANO

(Peers around the edge of the screen with
a fan covering his face. To VIRGINIO)
Don't overdo it.

VIRGINIO

May I announce Mr. Pantalone?

GRATIANO

(From behind the screen, having assumed
a falsetto voice)
Show him in.

VIRGINIO

(Bowing)
The room is yours.

PANTALONE

Thank you.

VIRGINIO

You're welcome.
(He departs through the rear exit.)

PANTALONE

Ah, Isabella, my love, how long I have waited to see you
alone.

GRATIANO

(Enters from behind screen)
Well here I am--but why have you wanted to see me?

PANTALONE

Oh, can't you guess, my dearest one? Once more, light of
my life, allow me to tell you that I am in love with you.
I present you my heart, larded with your graces, trussed
up with your charms, and steeped in your attractions.

GRATIANO

(To audience, from behind the fan)
His heart, eh? I'd like to baste him in the mouth.

PANTALONE

Come, my dearest Isabella, do not look away. It will mean
nothing to you and everything to me if you will exchange
an amorous embrace with a poor devil starved for your
youth and beauty.

GRATIANO

(To audience)

Not to mention the money.

PANTALONE

Gaze upon me, and observe how my passion shows.

GRATIANO

(To audience)

I could suggest amputation.

PANTALONE

If you but knew how deeply I am smitten...

GRATIANO

(To audience)

A happy thought...

PANTALONE

(He slides next to GRATIANO on the sofa,
but GRATIANO rises just in time, and PANTA-
LONE is left holding air.)

Come into my--arms.

GRATIANO

(Giggles)

You compliment me sir.

(He moves around the couch.)

PANTALONE

No more than you deserve, my dear one. As I look at you,
ah, as I look at you I perceive a dream walking. Such a
magnificent form puts even Venus to shame--to say nothing
of Helen of Troy.

GRATIANO

Sir, I thank you once again, but as I am rather tired and
sorrowful over the illness of my dear kittens, I must beg
you to be brief.

PANTALONE

(Has followed GRATIANO around the sofa.
GRATIANO suddenly turns around and they
come face to face.)

Ugh! To be sure, to be sure, my divine star of the heavens,
my sweet vessel of sorrow. I should have realized. But,
oh, how grief has changed you! Your cheeks, your cheeks

which were once of a vermillion as beautiful as the back-sides of a newly whipped child, are now so pale and gaunt that they seem like two dried codfish.

(PANTALONE offers GRATIANO a flask of liquor.)

Here, drink, drink.

(GRATIANO drinks, drinks, and drinks.)

But do not drink all, or you will reduce me to tears.

(GRATIANO sighs after having drunk.)

It is good, madame, isn't it?

(PANTALONE tries to retrieve the bottle, but GRATIANO clings to it. He takes another drink, recorks it, and places it carefully into the bosom of his dress.)

Farewell bottle, until we meet again. Dearest, you are a pretty little slipper, but, without a husband's foot, you are fast acquiring a run-down heel. Oh, if I could deserve the honour of deserving some small portion of your desserts. How I would love you. How I would caress you. How I would flatter you.

GRATIANO

A husband's foot, you say?

PANTALONE

Come, my fair one, tell me truly, wouldn't you be charmed to be my better half?

GRATIANO

(To audience)

I wonder which half that is.

PANTALONE

Haven't I an air about me and a fine manner? It makes me angry to see such idiots as Doctor Gratiano, for instance, trying to play the rival with me.

GRATIANO

I have always thought him a worthy gentleman.

PANTALONE

But not comparable in any way to me, you must admit.

GRATIANO

I have always found him an intelligent man, pleasing in form and figure, as well as wit.

PANTALONE

Oh, come, come, now. That, that jackass, pardon me, has no wit. As for a figure--I have seen bags tied in the middle do more for a suit of clothes than he does.

GRATIANO

Sir, please do not talk that way about one of my dearest friends.

PANTALONE

Dearest friends?

(To audience)

I suspect she is keeping something hidden from me. But Gratiano is such a fool! I'm certain my suspicions are groundless.

(To GRATIANO)

I agree, let's not discuss objectionable topics--only pleasant ones, such as our future happiness.

GRATIANO

That is a calculation that I would not count on, for one seldom attains the happiness one hopes for...

PANTALONE

But, I am a gentle, peaceful, and easy going man; my disposition's as smooth as satin. Why, I lived six years with my first wife without having the least little contention.

GRATIANO

That is, indeed, remarkable.

PANTALONE

Except once, when I snuffed some tobacco and wished to enjoy my sneeze. She was stupid enough to interrupt me, and I nearly choked to death.

GRATIANO

What a shame.

PANTALONE

She died not long after that. Now after many years of loneliness, I seek you for my wife...

GRATIANO

(To audience)

Ah, ha!

(To PANTALONE)

I can only see one slight obstacle to our marriage, and

that is that I am not all that you think I am, I am...

ALANZO

(Bursts into the room)

Ah, ha! Oh, ho! So, it is true. Behind my back you come to steal away my love!

PANTALONE

What do you mean, sir, by breaking rudely into a private interview, unannounced?

ALANZO

Unannounced--as if I needed an invitation to see my future bride!

PANTALONE

Has it ever occurred to you that in seven years the dear lady might have changed her mind?

ALANZO

(Overwrought)

Impossible! Her love for me is as unswerving as, as my brother's love for the sea. His first and only true love was for the sea. If it weren't for his constant roving on it, I would have found him before now and married Isabella long ago. So, you see, in actuality you are visiting my wife without my permission. Men have died for less.

PANTALONE

(Calmly)

You are mistaken, sir. She is not yet your wife.

ALANZO

But, I keep telling you, man, if it weren't for my father's dying wish, that my brother stand beside me at my marriage, we would have been wed many years ago. Isn't that true, Isabella?

GRATIANO

(Nods affirmation behind the fan)

Um hmm.

ALANZO

There, you see? So you are trespassing!

PANTALONE

Just a moment, I paid good mon--I mean, I was admitted and entered as a guest. I demand to be treated as one. Where is your hospitality?

ALANZO

Sir, I comply with your wishes. You say you entered as a guest? I now invite you to leave as one. But, if you persist in holding your ground, an unwise decision, I shall be forced to challenge you to a duel, which I hesitate to do because I scorn to soil my hands with the blood of so base a person.

PANTALONE

What?

ALANZO

(Scornfully)

I disdain from fighting with such a lesser man, for as you know, the power and glory of my good right arm is unsurpassed. And, when coupled with my mighty sword which as you know once hung in the air Damocles-wise, a frightening object to all until I seized it and found embossed on it in letters of gold...

PANTALONE

Gold?

ALANZO

"To The Most Gallant," I am invincible! In the combats that followed I won possession of it by defeating all the cutthroats of Italy. It was forged by Vulcan and owned in turn by Xerxes, Cyrus, Darius, Alexander, Romulus, Tarquin, the Roman Senate, and Caesar. Furthermore, it has powers that defy the most cunning Damascene scimitar. It sharpens itself by cutting and flashing in the slaughter of officers, and regains its brightness in the blood of colonels. That, my feeble friend, is why I abjure the pleasure of severing your scrawny neck, and separating your hideous head from your bilious body, realizing full well that your soft blood should destroy the temper of my weapon!

PANTALONE

(Overwhelmed)

Is that so? Well, well, well! I may not have the bloom of youth, but I am in the prime of life. Sir, I accept your challenge with pleasure. The duel shall take place at once.

ALANZO

(Astonished)

You accept?

PANTALONE

Yes.

ALANZO

Duel?

PANTALONE

Yes.

ALANZO

(He gulps.)

At once?

PANTALONE

Yes!

ALANZO

Well! I should be most happy to accomodate you, but I've just remembered a pressing engagement that I...

PANTALONE

Sir?

ALANZO

I should be delighted to comply with your wish, but I see, unfortunately, that there is but one sword between us. Mine. And that would put you at an unfair disadvantage.

PANTALONE

Well...

GRATIANO

(Still using falsetto voice)

Oh, Capitano, by chance you left your other sword there on the table the last time you were here.

ALANZO

I did? Well--ah...

PANTALONE

So now we can begin.

ALANZO

I should be overjoyed to oblige you, but a duel with bloodshed in the sight of this fragile and delicate flower is out of the question.

GRATIANO

Oh, I can turn my back. Go right ahead, I don't mind.

ALANZO

You don't?

PANTALONE

She doesn't.

ALANZO

Oh.

PANTALONE

Can it be, sir, that you are adverse to a duel?

ALANZO

Sir, you presume too much.

PANTALONE

Can it be, that the teeth of the great Capitano Alanzo Spavento are chattering in terror?

ALANZO

Nonsense. It's cold in here!

PANTALONE

Can it be that you tremble at my sword?

ALANZO

Utter foolishness. I quake merely because my blood is boiling in my veins; because of my rage at seeing you contest my true and lawful right to the fair Isabella. I have caught you out of bounds, sir, and the information leading to your apprehension here was worth every ducat I paid for it.

GRATIANO

Information?

PANTALONE

Ducat?

ALANZO

Yes, worth every ducat.

PANTALONE

Who told you?

GRATIANO

Yes, who informed you?

ALANZO

Why, it was Virginio.

PANTALONE

Virginio!

GRATIANO

(In the excitement GRATIANO'S voice assumes its normal pitch. He makes a violent gesture with his fan, his head-gear is disarranged, and the disguise is lost. This seems unimportant now, however, for bigger things are at stake.)

Virginio!

PANTALONE

That scoundrel, that libertine!

GRATIANO

(Violently)

That villain!

ALANZO

Why, that's not Isabella!

PANTALONE

It's

ALANZO & PANTALONE

(Astounded)

Dr. Gratiano!

PANTALONE

What are you doing here?

ALANZO

Yes, what? And dressed like that.

GRATIANO

(He rids himself of the dress.)

Let's not talk of such un consequential matters at a time like this. Here, help me out of this thing. Merely say, I was here to catch a base rogue, and the culprit has turned out to be Virginio. I suspect I have likewise been swindled.

PANTALONE

Oh?

(Amused)

He took money from you? How much did he take from you?

GRATIANO

Ten ducats.

ALANZO

Ten ducats.

PANTALONE

And ten from me.

(He adds the amount by figuring in the air, makes a mistake and erases with his elbow.)

That's thirty ducats!

GRATIANO

And I suspect that Isabella is not in the vicinity either.

(He looks behind the screen, out of the rear entrance, etc.)

Isabella, Isabella? Just as I thought! No sign of her.

ALANZO

Perhaps she's been abducted.

GRATIANO

Abducted?

PANTALONE

Abducted?

ALANZO

That rogue Virginio must be apprehended.

GRATIANO

At once!

PANTALONE

Immediately!

ALANZO

(Pausing)

Although, he may, perhaps, return to the scene of the crime.

PANTALONE

No doubt!

GRATIANO

They always do!

ALANZO

In that case, let's follow this strategy. There are two entrances to guard. You take one, and you the other.

(PANTALONE takes the one stage right,
and GRATIANO takes the one stage left.)

The moment he gets to the top of the stairs, clamp ah--ah--here, a bag over his head. One for you, and one for you. He may struggle, so you'd better give him a good one if he does.

PANTALONE

A brilliant idea. We'll just sit here and wait for him to come.

GRATIANO

A stroke of genius.

ALANZO

That's true. Now you have your orders, men, do not fail me.

PANTALONE

Aye, aye, Capitano.

GRATIANO

Aye, aye, sir.

ALANZO

And, while you are guarding, I shall be off to find the judge, and bring him back here, post haste. So--when the knave is captured he may be tried, found guilty, and punished without delay.

PANTALONE

Excellent!

GRATIANO

Splendid!

ALANZO

(He sings)

Justice must be done;
Equity be won.

The criminal will have his fill
Of plundering and fun,
Then out will claw the long armed law
And punishment begun.

PANTALONE & GRATIANO
And punishment begun.

ALANZO
For justice must be done.

PANTALONE & GRATIANO
For justice must, and justice shall, and justice will be
done!

PANTALONE
We'll chastise this atrocity
With frantic ferocity.
He's roused our animosity
With his unscrupulosity.

GRATIANO
No vociferosity
Will cease our verbosity.
We'll show him callosity
For his feigned pomposity.

ALANZO
His impetuosity
Has piqued curiosity.
Without generosity.

PANTALONE & GRATIANO
With raging velocity,

ALL
He'll get reciprocity from us!

ALANZO
Farewell!
(The lights slowly go down in ISABELLA'S
apartment and follow the CAPITANO as he
descends the stairs and travels toward
MARIO'S house on his way to fetch the
JUDGE. He continues to sing.)
Justice must be done;
Equity be won.

The criminal will have his fill of plundering and fun,
Then out will claw the long-armed law
And punishment begun,
For justice will be done!

(He spies ISABELLA sitting by the
entrance to MARIO'S home.)

Well, I'll be--what are you doing here? I thought you'd
been abducted.

ISABELLA

Abducted? Why, no, I--I--I just brought Prithwish here
to see the Doctor--poor little darling has injured his
paw. The Doctor wasn't home so I was just waiting.

ALANZO

(Angry that his idea has backfired)

Well, you have no business to be. Upsetting me like that!
What do you mean by worrying me like that? You should be
home, away from the roving eyes of roving men. Well, what
are you waiting for? Go there at once! That's an order!

(He remembers that PANTALONE and
GRATIANO are there.)

On second thought, you'd better stay right here, and wait
for me. My errand will take me but a moment.

ISABELLA

But I want...

ALANZO

Silence! Now that you have me, the paragon of manhood,
you should desire nothing else from life. I leave you
now, my first and only true love. I won't be long. You
may kiss me. Farewell.

(He goes off left.)

ISABELLA

(Furious)

Ohhh! Ohhh! That man! First and only true love, indeed!
That monster! He can't speak to me in that manner. If I
ever loved him, I cannot for the life of me remember why.
I hate him! I shall return his ring the very next time I
see him!

MURIELLO

(CAPITANO MURIELLO SPAVENTO, the twin,
enters. He is almost identical in appear-
ance to CAPITANO ALANZO SPAVENTO. He looks

around and is spied by ISABELLA who, taking him for his brother begins to vent her anger. MURIELLO is humming a sea chanty, the melody of "My First and Only Love.")

Da, da, da, da, da, dum...

ISABELLA

Well, that was a short errand.

MURIELLO

I beg your pardon, were you addressing me?

ISABELLA

Who else? I want you to know that no man can speak to me in the manner you just did.

MURIELLO

All I said was, I beg your pardon. But if I have offended you, dear lady, I humbly apologize.
(He bows.)

ISABELLA

You? Humbly apologize?

MURIELLO

Why, how could I be in the right when such a beautiful creature as you has contradicted me?

ISABELLA

Why, Capitano, what has come over you?

MURIELLO

You know I am a Capitano?

ISABELLA

Well, you've certainly never tried to keep it a secret.

MURIELLO

True, true, but I hate to think that it will cause lovely ladies such as yourself, to look down on me. If I thought that...

ISABELLA

Look down upon you?

(To audience)

My goodness, something about him has changed.

MURIELLO

Changed?

ISABELLA

Yes, you're different from the way you were a few moments ago.

MURIELLO

Am I really? Is the change for the better?

ISABELLA

Oh, yes, indeed it is.

MURIELLO

Then it must have been wrought by the meeting of such a delightful damsel as yourself. In just a few moments you have successfully made an improvement. Think what you could do in a lifetime.

ISABELLA

Well, I don't know...

MURIELLO

Don't know what?

ISABELLA

About a lifetime. You've made me quite angry since you've returned.

MURIELLO

Unwittingly, to be sure, my lovely lady.

ISABELLA

(Sighs)

It's so pleasant to be treated like a person, and not a piece of merchandise.

MURIELLO

How could anyone ever treat you like a piece of merchandise?

ISABELLA

You ought to know.

MURIELLO

I ought?

ISABELLA

If I, if I could really believe what you say, and that you

are truly changed--Tell me, tell me of your first and only love as you call it.

MURIELLO

My first and only love? Oh, you mean...
 (He gestures toward the sea, but she
 is in a trance, so he sings.)

My first and only love
 Is the only one for me.
 In summer, in winter,
 In springtime, and fall
 With her I always will be.
 I gaze in the distance and
 All that I see is she.
 I face the horizon, and she
 Alone do I see.

Wearing her white caps
 In shimmering hues of blues and of greens,
 Her beauty stays with me whenever I visit new scenes.
 Wherever I wander, she stays in my mind,
 I'd know if her mood changed although I were blind.
 She is my master, her slave will ever I be.
 Her great fascination is what has endeared her to me.

My first and only love
 Is the only one for me.
 In summer, in winter,
 In springtime, and fall
 With her I always will be.
 I gaze in the distance and
 All that I see is she.
 I face the horizon, and she
 Alone do I see.

I feel her cool touch on my brow
 As swiftly I sail.
 When she is gentle and calm
 I know I'll not fail.
 Though she rages, I'll never forsake her,
 In choosing I always shall take her.
 She is my life, ordained from above,
 She is my first, she is my first,
 And my only, only love.

ISABELLA

Is that really the way you feel?

MURIELLO

Can you doubt it fair lady?

ISABELLA

Then the engagement is still on, and I shall keep the ring after all.

MURIELLO

Engagement? Ring?

ISABELLA

Come, let's not talk about it anymore. Now we'll go to my house, and you can tell me more over a nice cool glass of--

(She has pulled him along, but suddenly stops just outside her entrance.)

Oh, I forgot. I just remembered, I had a visitor before I left, and I don't know if he's still waiting. You go up this way and if he's there, tell him to leave. Meanwhile, I'll go up the other way, so he won't see me when he goes, if he is there.

MURIELLO

But...

ISABELLA

Go ahead no.

(MURIELLO ascends the stairs and GRATIANO clamps the bag over his head, just as PANTALONE clamps the bag over the head of ISABELLA.)

GRATIANO

(Amidst the general noise and confusion)

I have him! I have him! Pantalone, come and help me!

PANTALONE

What do you mean, you have him? I have him!

GRATIANO

This is not the time for playing ridiculous games. I tell you I have him. We couldn't both have him.

PANTALONE

That's true, and yet, I have him!

GRATIANO

Why do you persist in being difficult? You don't, I do!

PANTALONE

Then, you've bagged an imposter.

GRATIANO

Imposter? Oh, my word, I think, I think I've bagged the Capitano.

(He removes the bag.)

PANTALONE

Oh, merciful heaven, I think--

(He lifts up the bag a little, then pulls it down, up again, peeks, and down.)

Oh, no! It couldn't be. Virginio wouldn't be wearing a skirt though, would he? No, no, I didn't think so. Ohhh, I'm lost. It's Isabella.

(He pulls off the bag.)

ISABELLA

(Furious)

What is the meaning of this?

MURIELLO

Yes, what is the meaning of this?

GRATIANO

Well, you see...

PANTALONE

It's like this...

GRATIANO

That is to say...

PANTALONE

We mean...

GRATIANO

To be blunt...

PANTALONE

To come right to the point...

GRATIANO

That wicked servant of my son...

PANTALONE

Of his son...

Stole money...	GRATIANO
From us.	PANTALONE
How much?	ISABELLA
Thirty ducats!	PANTALONE
Ten apiece.	GRATIANO
You mean Virginio?	ISABELLA
None other. The scoundrel!	PANTALONE
The wretch!	GRATIANO
I gave him ten ducats, too.	ISABELLA
You, too, were stolen from by this rogue?	MURIELLO
Well, I...	ISABELLA
Shhh--I hear someone coming. It must be Virginio returning to the scene of the crime.	GRATIANO
Must be. Everyone else is accounted for.	PANTALONE
Quickly, he's coming up the stairs.	GRATIANO
Open the bag.	PANTALONE
Get the rope.	GRATIANO

ISABELLA

What can I do?

MURIELLO

Here, hit him with this vase.

(CAPITANO ALANZO SPAVENTO mounts to the top of the stairs. Once there, they all pounce on him.)

GRATIANO

Got him!

(General ad libbing)

ISABELLA

Tie him tightly.

PANTALONE

Solid knots.

MURIELLO

A man of the sea ties nothing but solid knots.

GRATIANO

What'll we do with him?

ISABELLA

Put him behind the screen for the time being, until we decide what to do with him.

PANTALONE

(To MURIELLO)

When will the Judge be here?

MURIELLO

The Judge?

GRATIANO

Wasn't he in?

PANTALONE

Well, you'd better try again.

MURIELLO

But, I, I don't know where he lives.

GRATIANO

The same place he always did.

PANTALONE

He's never moved.

MURIELLO

One of you had better point out the way.

PANTALONE

(To GRATIANO)

I'll stay and guard the prisoner, while you go.

GRATIANO

No, indeed, I'll stay. You go.

ISABELLA

(Understanding their eagerness to stay)

Virginio can't escape with the knots the Capitano tied.
You both can go.

PANTALONE

Well...

GRATIANO

Well...

PANTALONE & GRATIANO

All right.

(They follow MURIELLO down the stairs.)

PANTALONE

You go down this street until you see a red house.

GRATIANO

Then you turn right and proceed until you approach a
lavender house.

PANTALONE

Then left till you see a yellow house.

GRATIANO

And that's it.

MURIELLO

Red, lavender, yellow.

PANTALONE

Red, right.

GRATIANO
Lavender, left.

PANTALONE
Get it?

MURIELLO
Got it!

GRATIANO
Good!

MURIELLO
I won't be long

PANTALONE
I suggest that we both wait here until he returns.

GRATIANO
An admirable suggestion.
(They both sit by the entrance to ISABELLA'S home, stage left. The light dims upon them, and comes up on VIRGINIO who is seated stage right in front of the Inn of PANTALONE.)

VIRGINIO
(To audience)
Now I have the money, but I can't find the courage to go into the Inn. She might laugh at me. I couldn't bear that. What'll I do, what'll I do? I know, the best thing to do is to go home and work out a definite plan of action!
(He, by this time, has risen and started toward his home. He sings,
"Whenever I See That Certain Girl."
Completely absorbed in his thoughts of ARGENTINA, he passes GRATIANO and PANTALONE, and greets them automatically. They do likewise.)

GRATIANO
Hello, Virginio.

PANTALONE
Hello, Virginio.

VIRGINIO
(Realizing his stupidity, begins to run after doing a take.)
Whoops!

GRATIANO & PANTALONE

(Have much the same reaction)

Virginio? Virginio! Virginio!

(The chase is on. VIRGINIO manages to evade them time and again, but finally he is caught.)

PANTALONE

So, the Capitano's knots weren't fast after all.

GRATIANO

I guess we were faster than they were, eh?

VIRGINIO

Knots?

PANTALONE

(To audience)

He escaped while Isabella was guarding him.

GRATIANO

(Realizing this with horror.)

What have you done to Isabella?

VIRGINIO

Isabella? Why, I--I--I...

PANTALONE

Come with us, you base villain.

GRATIANO

If you've even so much as harmed a hair on her head...

PANTALONE

We'll not wait for the judge.

GRATIANO

We'll not postpone the trial.

(The lights on the second floor have come up again as the three ascend.)

ISABELLA

Why, Doctor, and Mr. Pantalone, what is Virginio doing with you?

PANTALONE

Did he harm you my dear?

GRATIANO

Did he strike you, my love?

ISABELLA

Why no. Nothing's happened to me. But, I don't understand. If Virginio is here, who is that behind the screen?

PANTALONE

Why no one. Don't you see, Virginio escaped.

GRATIANO

He must have skulked out while you were in another room.

ISABELLA

But, I wasn't out of this...

(ALANZO SPAVENTO grunts from behind the screen.)

What was that grunt behind the screen then?

PANTALONE

Grunt?

GRATIANO

Grunt?

PANTALONE

I didn't hear any grunt. Did you hear a grunt?

GRATIANO

No, I didn't hear any grunt.

(There is a great moan.)

ISABELLA

There it is again.

PANTALONE

Oh yes, seems to me I did hear a slight sound. Could it be one of your kittens?

GRATIANO

Yes, indeed, I, too, detected an audible utterance.

(He removes the screen.)

Yes, I would say there was definitely someone here.

PANTALONE

A profound conclusion.

ISABELLA

Well, who is it?

GRATIANO

In just a moment, dear lady, the mystery will be revealed.
(He unties the sack.)

ISABELLA

Why, why it's the Capitano.

PANTALONE

What is he doing here?

ISABELLA

Oh, my poor dear, say something.

ALANZO

(Moans)

I was ambushed, sabotaged! Somebody hit me!

(Moans)

While innocently coming up the stairs, returning from a successful mission, someone thrust a bag over my head, and threw me in the corner. Not only that, they also hit me on the head. That's all I remember. That anyone should do this to me, the great Capitano Alanzo Spavento, is an unthinkable outrage. When I find the guilty person, the culprit, I shall whip him within an inch of his life. Then I shall have him drawn and quartered to get rid of the last remaining inch.

ISABELLA

(Heartbroken)

Why, Capitano, you've changed back into your old self again.

ALANZO

What the devil are you muttering about, woman? Well, don't just stand there. I've been mortally injured, wounded, help me! Untie these ropes.

PANTALONE

So, Virginio, you not only tried to escape...

GRATIANO

But, you also had the audacity, the unmitigated gall to do this heinous deed, to incapacitate the Capitano, and substitute him for yourself, just, I repeat, just so the escape would not be so quickly detected.

PANTALONE
Beautifully phrased, Doctor.

GRATIANO
Thank you.

PANTALONE
You're welcome.

GRATIANO
Finally, due to our superior deductive qualities we tracked the rascal to his lair and there in one fell swoop apprehended the villain.

PANTALONE
Congratulations, Doctor.

GRATIANO
Best wishes to you, too.

ISABELLA
I do wish that Judge would hurry and get here.

ALANZO
(With malice)
I think we should forget about the Judge.

GRATIANO
No, no, no! Let's first bind this culprit once again, and this time insure his confinement.

VIRGINIO
But, but, I didn't...

ALANZO
Silence!

(GRATIANO and PANTALONE tie VIRGINIO while ISABELLA finishes untying the CAPITANO.)
Isabella, can't you hurry? Do you want me to be seen by the Judge with my hands bound?

ISABELLA
I'm doing the best I can.

ALANZO
The sooner we get married the more troubles we'll avoid.

If that bothersome brother of mine would only have had the sense to have shown up a long time ago--and now here we are in the same situation we were in before.

ISABELLA

Not quite. Did you say your brother was an identical twin?

ALANZO

Of course, he was an identical twin. My parents accepted nothing but the best. But, he was a great disappointment. He was never around when anyone needed him. Always gone off sailing somewhere.

ISABELLA

Sailing, of course! Was his first and only love--was it the sea?

ALANZO

Was, is, and always will be, as far as I know. Aren't those knots untied yet?

ISABELLA

Almost, almost.

(To audience)

The sea, eh. That's what I thought. That is just what I thought.

(THE CURTAIN FALLS ON THE SECOND ACT.)

TRUE LOVE AND SPAGHETTI

ACT III

(The curtain opens on an empty stage. The JUDGE enters. He is carrying an enormous portfolio and has a large quill pen behind his ear. The problem facing him at the moment is finding the correct house.)

JUDGE

I d-do wish that the Capitano would have stayed with me and taken me to the correct house. Everybody's always in such a hur-hur-rush. Won't last long that way. Well, I certainly don't know which house it is.

(To audience)

Oh! Would you m-mind telling m-me which is the house that desires a judge?

(A person planted in the audience shouts out, "the middle one.")

Thank you. I'm much obliged. Thank you.

(He knocks at the entrance to ISABELLA'S house.)

ISABELLA

(From upstairs)

Who is it?

JUDGE

(Looking for the voice)

It's--a--the Judge.

ISABELLA

Oh, Mr. Judge, you just wait right there. We'll be down in a moment.

JUDGE

I'll be waiting.

(To audience)

M-my what a handsome creature. It's not often I get to see such loveliness. Now m-my wife--on second thought, let's

not talk about my wife. I'm head of my court anyway.

ISABELLA

(Enters, followed by PANTALONE, GRATIANO, ALANZO and VIRGINIO)

Here we are, Judge. This is Mr. Pantalone, and Dr. Gratiano. Of course you know the Capitano.

JUDGE

Yes, of course.

PANTALONE

Shall we proceed with the trial? Here is the accused.

GRATIANO

Yes, let us commence with the examination of his black deeds.

JUDGE

Then m-might I suggest that we be off to the court house?

ISABELLA

But, that's so far away, and I'm sure the trip would tire me.

PANTALONE

We musn't tire the lady.

GRATIANO

We certainly wouldn't want to overtax her strength.

JUDGE

But, a trial is never held anywhere but in the courthouse. I m-must abide by the rules, and insist that...

ALANZO

(Drawing his sword)

Sir, the trial, if you please, shall be held here!

JUDGE

On second thought, I have decid-decid-concluded that this will be an excellent place for a trial. I m-must have a table, however.

PANTALONE

There's one by my Inn.

ALANZO

We'll get it for you Judge.

PANTALONE

(Proceeding to get the table)

I really don't know how much to charge.

ALANZO

Charge?

PANTALONE

Rent for the table, of course. I think I shall submit a rather large bill, since it's being paid for by the government.

ALANZO

Come, come, the table.

ISABELLA

(Calling)

Can't you hurry.

PANTALONE

(Calling inside the Inn)

Argentina! Flaminia! Come here at once!

(They enter.)

I want this table moved over there. I shall help you by carrying the cloth.

ALANZO

And I shall help by carrying the bowl of fruit.

FLAMINIA & ARGENTINA

And we should carry the table?

PANTALONE

Exactly.

(They carry it with difficulty.)

(To audience)

Isn't it fine to have such an obedient servant and such a dutiful daughter?

ARGENTINA

(Sees VIRGINIO, and drops table)

Virginio! What are you doing here? What have they done to you?

JUDGE

Don't go near the accused M-Miss, he m-may be dangerous.

ARGENTINA

Nonsense, it's Virginio.

FLAMINIA

What has he done?

JUDGE

Committed m-many crimes.

VIRGINIO

I was only doing my duty. They won't listen to me. Mario said--I want to see Mario...

FLAMINIA

Oh, so you were helping Mario were you? That--that--This morning I thought you and Mario were sincere and noble, but now I have learned my lesson. I am through with men forever. Judge, I have no doubt that he is guilty.

ARGENTINA

Flaminia, how can you say that?

PANTALONE

It's an open and shut case. Argentina, as my servant you should think as I do, that he is guilty.

ARGENTINA

Well, I'm going to get Mario.

VIRGINIO

Thank you Argentina!

ARGENTINA

You're welcome, Virginio.
(She goes to the Inn.)

FLAMINIA

(Calling after her)

Yes, get him, then we can put him on trial too, for breaking a maiden's heart.

JUDGE

Shall we get on with the business at hand? I'm a busy man.

PANTALONE

By all means, let's proceed without delay.

GRATIANO

Let's hesitate no longer.

(ARGENTINA comes dismally out of the Inn.)

VIRGINIO

(Anxiously)

Where's Mario?

ARGENTINA

I'm afraid he isn't feeling too well. He's, he's--well, I guess it took a lot to drown his sorrows.

FLAMINIA

(Trying not to appear concerned)

He's ill? Oh, dear! But, it doesn't matter to me anyway.

VIRGINIO

(Moaning)

Oh, I'm lost...

ARGENTINA

(Comforting him)

Don't think that. I'll stand by you.

PANTALONE

Not when you hear what he's done, you won't.

GRATIANO

Not when you comprehend how flagitiously he has acted.

ALANZO

Come, come, let's get on with the trial. This emotional foolishness disgusts me.

JUDGE

I agree.

VIRGINIO

(Gathering courage)

Argentina, I know you don't love me, but whatever happens, I--I...

ARGENTINA

Yes?

VIRGINIO

I want you to know...

ARGENTINA

Yes?

VIRGINIO

(He spurts it out.)

That, I love you! There I said it.

ARGENTINA

You do?

VIRGINIO

And, whatever I did was for you, so we could get...

ARGENTINA

Yes...

VIRGINIO

(Sadly)

But, then you love Polichinelle.

ARGENTINA

No, I don't really. I love you!

VIRGINIO

You do?

ARGENTINA

Yes.

ALANZO

Oh, for the love of Italy!

PANTALONE

Let's stop wasting time.

GRATIANO

Judge, you may begin.

JUDGE

I sh-shall begin.

FLAMINIA

Good.

PANTALONE

Excellent.

GRATIANO

Splendid.

ALANZO

Wonderful.

ARGENTINA

Oh, slop!

JUDGE

(Ignoring her)

I repeat, I shall begin.

(He salutes the company, then opens his great portfolio and carefully extracts papers.)

There now, I'll just put these here, then I'll have them when I n-need them. Oh, oh...

(He stops suddenly.)

ALANZO

Now, what's the matter?

JUDGE

(Searching for something)

Well, I can't, I can't seem to findm-my pen. I had it here someplace, I know, because...

ISABELLA

(Goes to the JUDGE and pulls the quill from behind his ear. She tickles his nose with it. He sneezes and giggles.)

JUDGE

Oh, why, yes--m-my, how clever you are.

PANTALONE

Now we'll begin.

JUDGE

I'm willing.

GRATIANO

We know.

JUDGE

Would you rather I used Latin or the vernacular?

PANTALONE

The vernacular...

JUDGE

Good--ah--by way of demonstration, deliberation, or judicially? I'm best at the latter.

PANTALONE

But, I've told you...

JUDGE

The judicial would be m-most appropriate, from the deliberative much is lacking, and the demonstrative does n-not please m-me.

(He is finally settled.)

There. I shall commence, but, once I start I sh-shall have begun.

GRATIANO

That sounds like something I might have said.

PANTALONE

Once he starts--even the accused knows that much.

JUDGE

First allow m-me to clear m-my throat.

ISABELLA

As often as you please.

JUDGE

Now, I will address you with such brevity, that where another would never end, I...

ALANZO

(He has been smoldering and the flame finally breaks through.)

Now that's enough!

(He again draws his sword.)

Judge, begin the trial.

JUDGE

(Whining)

But, I can't find my handkerchief, and my n-nose is running, and everyone n-knows that a n-nose...

GRATIANO

Here, use mine.

(He puts it to the JUDGE'S nose, and the JUDGE blows.)

JUDGE

Thank you.

GRATIANO

You're welcome.

JUDGE

M-my what a pretty handkerchief--m-mind if I clean m-my glasses?

(There are no lenses, so he pushes his handkerchief covered finger through the holes in the frames.)

GRATIANO

Go right ahead, and mop your brow, too, while you're at it.

JUDGE

There, now I can see.

(He stands officially, and sings.)

The ca-ca-court is now in session.

Council for the prosecution step forth and give us your impression of his, Virginio's, transgression.

Raise your right hands. Swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you...

ALANZO, GRATIANO, PANTALONE, FLAMINIA, ISABELLA
So help us.

(They are now assembled as a jury, and ad lib appropriately during the following proceedings.)

JUDGE

In that case, begin. First witness take the stand.

PANTALONE

A working man you know I am.

Of need I'm rather thrifty,

And I'll attest to you all now

This character is shifty.

(He points to VIRGINIO.)

CHORUS

(Members listed above)

And he'll attest to us all now, this character is shifty.

PANTALONE

From me he's filched ten golden coins,
A sum I can't afford,
At any time to lose,
And when a thief such gold purloins,
A deed that's most abhorred,
It's my right to accuse!

CHORUS

It's his right to accuse!

JUDGE

Next witness, please testify.

ALANZO

A soldier bold you know I am,
I've traveled far and wide--
Met many men, but don't know when
There's been one who's so lied!

CHORUS

Met many men, but knows not when there's been one who's
so lied!

ALANZO

From me he's filched ten golden coins,
A sum I can't afford at any time to lose,
And when a thief much gold purloins,
A deed that's most abhorred,
It's my right to accuse!

CHORUS

It's his right to accuse!

JUDGE

Next witness, come forward.

GRATIANO

A doctor, just, you know I am,
As fair as day is long
But, in this case I feel compelled
To say that he is wrong!

CHORUS

But in this case, he feels compelled to say that he is
wrong.

GRATIANO

From me he's filched ten golden coins,
 A sum I can't afford at any time to lose,
 And when a thief much gold purloins,
 A deed that's most abhorred,
 It's my right to accuse!

CHORUS

It's his right to accuse.

JUDGE

Next witness, rise, and state your case.

ISABELLA

A maiden fair you know I am.
 I wouldn't hurt a flea,
 But gold he charged for services,
 Was not returned to me.

GRATIANO

From her he's filched ten golden coins,

PANTALONE

A sum she can't afford

ALANZO

At any time to lose!

CHORUS

And when a thief such gold purloins,
 A deed that's most abhorred,
 It's her right to accuse!
 The gold has never been restored.
 Every word we say, record!
 It's our right to accuse.
 You see, you see,
 I think we all agree.
 We can't excuse!
 We all accuse!
 And we demand a warranty,
 An iron bonded guarantee.
 The prisoner shall not,
 The prisoner shall not,
 Go free!

JUDGE

Thank you, thank you, thank you. As I see it, Virginio
 has been accused with...

PANTALONE

Thievery!

GRATIANO

Perjury!

ALANZO

Knavery!

JUDGE

Yes. N-now will the counsel for the defense take the stand?

(No one steps forward.)

I say, is there an attorney to defend the accused? No one?

ARGENTINA

(Steps forward defiantly)

I wish to defend the accused, your honor.

CHORUS

You? What? She?

JUDGE

Is your plea innocent or guilty?

ARGENTINA

Innocent, your honor.

CHORUS

What? How so? Innocent?

ARGENTINA

I plead temporary insanity.

CHORUS

(Amazed)

Temporary insanity?

ARGENTINA

(Pleased with herself)

Yes.

VIRGINIO

(Takes the cue. He makes a face and rubs his hand over his lips.)

Blubble, blubble, blubble.

ARGENTINA

I call as my first witness, Virginio.

JUDGE

Permiss-permiss-go ahead. Accused, take the stand.

ARGENTINA

State your name.

VIRGINIO

Virgin--io.

JUDGE

Your last name too.

VIRGINIO

I told you it's I-O.

JUDGE

Then your first name's Virgin?

PANTALONE

Prove it! Prove it! I demand proof!

ARGENTINA

I object. The pre-nuptial status of the accused is not under consideration!

JUDGE

Objection sustained.

ARGENTINA

(Makes a face at PANTALONE)

So there.

VIRGINIO

You see, my name came to me from my father, who married my mother, so that my mother, who was the daughter of my grandfather, who was the father of my mother, had a husband so she could have me, but, by that time I was already on the way.

JUDGE

I see. Then how many fathers did you have?

VIRGINIO

I had only one. I was always a poor boy, and couldn't afford any more.

ARGENTINA

When did you come into the world?

VIRGINIO

When it pleased my parents to bring me into it, for that was something about which I was never consulted.

(He chuckles, and sits.)

JUDGE

Why are you sitting down?

VIRGINIO

Because I'm tired.

ALANZO

Don't you know you are in the presence of the most high Judge, and...

VIRGINIO

But, I sit down in church, in the presence of...

ALANZO

Yes, but, don't you know that the Judge is a person elevated above all others...

VIRGINIO

He is not as high as the cock on the village steeple, and that even tells what the weather is going to do.

GRATIANO

(To his neighbors)

It is evident that she is getting nowhere with this line of questioning. It's his sanity that she says is in doubt...

ARGENTINA

I'm coming to that. By these few simple questions I want to establish beyond a doubt that he is sane now, but this morning, when the crime was committed he was out of his mind. Now, Virginio, just answer these questions as best you can. What is the fastest thing in all the world?

VIRGINIO

Ah--thought!

ARGENTINA

(To others)

How's that?

(To VIRGINIO)

Now, Virginio, how would you go about carrying water in a sieve?

VIRGINIO

I'd wait until it was frozen.

ARGENTINA

Very good. Virginio, if you had a choice, which wine would you choose as the best wine to drink?

VIRGINIO

Oh, that's easy. The best wine is the wine you drink at your neighbor's house for it doesn't cost anything.

ARGENTINA

Now, that's sensible. Would any of you now say that he's not sane? All right then. Now, Virginio, think back. This morning what was on your mind.

VIRGINIO

(Solemnly)

Three things--money, courage, and death.

ARGENTINA

Why were these things on your mind?

VIRGINIO

Because, if I didn't get the first two, I would have to have the last.

ARGENTINA

Why was that?

VIRGINIO

(Embarrassed)

To win the hand of Argentina--you see, I was mad with jealousy!

ARGENTINA

(To the others, with great gusto)

There, you see, ladies and gentlemen, there is the motive. He was insane with jealousy. This poor, overwrought boy was insane with jealousy and something in his mind snapped. Click, click. Give him a chance. He has realized his debt to society, and will make good his wrong. Don't make him suffer. Don't be cruel to a heart that's true! Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I rest my case.

JUDGE

(Weeping)

Thank you, thank you for your straightforward, logical evidence. Has the counsel for the prosecution anything to add?

ALANZO

(To audience)

Poor boy, my eye! I have a bump on my head that shows what a poor boy he is. If she thinks that she can win with emotion--we'll just see.

(To JUDGE)

I wish to cross-examine the accused!

ARGENTINA

Oh, oh.

JUDGE

Proceed.

ALANZO

Virginio!

VIRGINIO

Sir?

ALANZO

Have you ever been in prison?

(All eagerly await the reply)

VIRGINIO

Yes sir.

(General excitement, at last something conclusive)

To carry in some dinner for one of my friends who was arrested for debt.

ALANZO

Hmmm. Were you ever associated with anyone's death?

VIRGINIO

Yes sir!

(General reaction again)

Last year I was at the gallows where a man was hanged.

ALANZO

Hmmm. Have you ever said anything bad about the Judge?

VIRGINIO

Yes sir.

(Reaction--now we have him.)

Once he was sick. Dr. Gratiano treated him, and whenever anybody asked me for news I said, "He is very bad, indeed!"

ALANZO

Hmmm. Well, can you deny that you employed deceit and trickery to extort money this morning from the good people here?

VIRGINIO

Well, I...

ALANZO

Answer, yes or no!

VIRGINIO

Yes or no.

ALANZO

One or the other, not both.

VIRGINIO

Yes, but I was under the influence of love for Argentina...

ALANZO

You have heard him, ladies and gentlemen. His answer was yes, and I say he is guilty.

(He bows. There is applause.)

Your honor?

JUDGE

Yes? Oh, well, are there any m-more questions? In that case, the jury will please reach a verdict.

(The jury gets into a huddle, except for VIRGINIO and ARGENTINA.)

ALANZO

(After a few seconds)

After long and careful deliberation, your honor, we believe the plea of temporary insanity to be invalid, and we find the accused guilty!

ARGENTINA

Guilty?

VIRGINIO

Woe is me.

JUDGE

After carefully considering the charges, the sentence I propose is swift exportation.

ARGENTINA

Exportation?

ALANZO

Banishment.

PANTALONE

Exile.

GRATIANO

Expatriation.

VIRGINIO

Oh, no.

ALANZO

Where to?

JUDGE

Someplace wild.

PANTALONE

Someplace uncivilized.

GRATIANO

Someplace where they'll take anybody.

ALANZO

I have it--America.

JUDGE

(He has been munching fruit.)

Yes. Virginio is hereby exiled to America.

VIRGINIO

But, there's nothing but savages there!

PANTALONE

Nevertheless, you're going.

ALANZO

And on the next boat.

ARGENTINA

But, but...

GRATIANO

Put him in a sack and ship him immediately.

ARGENTINA

I demand a new trial--we'll appeal to a higher court.

PANTALONE

Argentina, be quiet.

ARGENTINA

(She is helpless.)

But...

ISABELLA

Now that that's settled, I have an announcement to make.

GRATIANO

Yes?

PANTALONE

Yes?

ALANZO

Yes?

ISABELLA

I have finally decided to marry.

FLAMINIA

(Bursting into tears)

Ohhh.

PANTALONE

(To audience)

Oh, good night. She's started again. If it's not one it's the other.

(To FLAMINIA)

Now what's the matter?

FLAMINIA

(Sobbing)

Mar--Mar--Mario.

ISABELLA

Oh, my dear, Mario isn't the man I've chosen to marry.

FLAMINIA

He isn't?

ALANZO

Of course not.

PANTALONE

How could you think that? That young whipper-snapper. She obviously wants someone more mature.

GRATIANO

I'm glad you recognize that fact. Mario, what a ridiculous idea.

FLAMINIA

Then what was he doing coming out of your house early this morning?

ALANZO

What?

PANTALONE

What?

GRATIANO

What?

ISABELLA

Why, I thought I told you. He came over to bandage Prithwish's foot.

FLAMINIA

Who's Prithwish?

ISABELLA

My kitten.

FLAMINIA

What?

ISABELLA

And if you see Mario, tell him that Prithwish is ever so grateful.

FLAMINIA

But, I thought you were in love with Mario.

ISABELLA

Well, my dear, I thought so too; but, I know now that he's not the man for me. I am sorry if I caused any trouble between you. Living with cats so long, I guess my claws

are sharper than they should be. You understand, don't you my dear?

FLAMINIA

Why yes, yes, I guess so. Then he wasn't--and he didn't--and you weren't--Oh, I'm afraid I've made a dreadful mistake. I'd better see if I can make amends.

(She exits into the Inn.)

I hope I'm not too late.

PANTALONE

Now that Isabella has finally decided who she really loves, and naturally it's the best man...

GRATIANO

Naturally.

ALANZO

Naturally.

PANTALONE

Might I suggest that the wedding take place immediately, as long as the Judge is here, I mean.

GRATIANO

A capital suggestion.

ALANZO

An admirable idea.

(To audience)

I don't like to disregard my father's wishes but enough's enough! I did try to find my twin brother.

ISABELLA

Well, I suppose we might just as well have it now, but I'll have to put on my wedding gown first.

PANTALONE

I'll change too.

GRATIANO

Likewise.

ALANZO

If anyone should change, it's I.

ISABELLA

Then we all agree. Let's meet back here in ten minutes.

GRATIANO

Splendid.

ALANZO

Excellent.

PANTALONE

Good.

ARGENTINA

But, what about Virginio?

ALANZO

Yes, what about Virginio? Who's going to guard him?

ARGENTINA

That's not what I meant!

ALANZO

I know--Polichinelle can do it. By the way, where is Polichinelle?

ARGENTINA

The last time I saw him, he was in the kitchen of the Inn, buried under a mound of spaghetti.

ALANZO

Spaghetti? But, I gave him specific orders.
(He goes to the door of the Inn and calls
POLICHINELLE.)
Polichinelle! Polichinelle?

POLICHINELLE

(Off)

What is it?

ALANZO

Come out here this instant!

POLICHINELLE

(Enters carrying a large plate of spaghetti. He has obviously grown several sizes around the middle since his last appearance.)

What?

ALANZO

I thought I told you no more spaghetti!

POLICHINELLE

Oh, did you? I must have forgotten.

ALANZO

You forgot? Short memory you have.

POLICHINELLE

I...

ALANZO

Your disobedience is becoming more and more flagrant.

POLICHINELLE

It is?

ALANZO

Yes it is! And one more such misdemeanor and you shall no longer be in the employ of the great Capitano Alanzo Spavento.

POLICHINELLE

(Belches)

Oh.

(He puts his hand over his mouth.)

Excuse me.

ALANZO

(Taking the spaghetti away)

That's enough of that.

(He puts it on the JUDGE'S table.)

POLICHINELLE

But, but...

ALANZO

Now, see if you can follow these orders without forgetting. Take Virginio to the dock, and put him on the ship that's ready to sail. Take care nothing happens to him!

POLICHINELLE

Yes, sir.

JUDGE

(He has been tasting the spaghetti.)

Mm-my, this spaghetti is tasty. I believe I'll have some m-more of this while I'm waiting.

PANTALONE

Come right along then. It's really not very expensive.

ALANZO

All right. Ten minutes, everyone.

(They all exit into their respective houses except ARGENTINA, VIRGINIO, and POLICHINELLE.)

ARGENTINA

I thought they'd never go.

(POLICHINELLE examines the empty spaghetti platter and pouts.)

Oh, Polichinelle, did Capitano take your spaghetti away from you?

POLICHINELLE

Yes, and I think it was very inconsiderate of him. One has to eat to live.

ARGENTINA

And others like you live to eat.

(She whispers something in VIRGINIO'S ear, and the seeds of a plan are sewn. POLICHINELLE has not noticed.)

VIRGINIO

Oh, Argentina, you know how I love to eat too, and I can hardly wait to go. They say, they say, that the food there is delicious.

ARGENTINA

Yes, that's what they say.

VIRGINIO

And all you can eat, too.

ARGENTINA

My, how I envy you.

POLICHINELLE

Go? Food? Eat? Where?

VIRGINIO

Oh, it's confidential.

ARGENTINA

Yes, a secret.

POLICHINELLE

Oh, come on, you can tell me.

VIRGINIO

Well...

ARGENTINA

Well--if it were anyone but you we wouldn't, but...

POLICHINELLE

Yes?

ARGENTINA

A special honor has been bestowed upon Virginio.

POLICHINELLE

You don't say.

VIRGINIO

Just think, I, I am going to...

ARGENTINA

America!

POLICHINELLE

Really? America? Where's that?

VIRGINIO

You mean...

ARGENTINA

You mean...

VIRGINIO

You mean you've never heard?

(Both VIRGINIO and ARGENTINA shake their heads.)

Tsk, tsk.

ARGENTINA

That's the land of plenty.

(She sings.)

America's the land of plenty--of food.

For food in the streets of gold is strewed.

It's a place the likes of which we know--you'd

Like to see.

VIRGINIO

You'd never want in America,

A land of spaghetti and meat balls,

Where food that is honey sweet calls,

Calls you to seat in halls with elite,
Where you are invited
To eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, and eat!

ARGENTINA

You'd never want in America,
A land where delectable fare is,
A place, we tell you, where there is
No servitude, a great plentitude,
And savory platters
Of food, of food, of food, of food, of food.

ARGENTINA & VIRGINIO

America's the land of plenty--of food.
For food in the streets of gold is strewed.
It's a place the likes of which we know--you'd
Like to see.
The land's not effete, its boards are replete,
It beckons, it calls,
It entreats you, it draws,
I've a treat, come and eat,
Have a seat, overeat
My spaghetti, my juicy, my tender, my tempting, my tasty,
My luscious meat balls.

POLICHINELLE

Gosh, that's some honor--going there, I mean. But why
are you in a sack? That doesn't look very comfortable.

VIRGINIO

The sack? Well...

ARGENTINA

Oh, that, that's part of the ceremony.

POLICHINELLE

I see. But, why am I guarding, if it's such an honor?

ARGENTINA

Well, that's obvious.

VIRGINIO

It is? I mean, it is!

ARGENTINA

It's so no one else will try to take Virginio's place. You
heard what the Capitano said, "Take care that nothing hap-
pens to him while we're away."

POLICHINELLE

Oh, yes. He did say that didn't he? Some nerve ordering me around that way. I have half a mind...

ARGENTINA

Yes?

POLICHINELLE

To leave him. I'd make as fine a master as he is any day. In fact, I've often thought that people couldn't tell which was master and which servant, especially at night.

ARGENTINA

How's that?

POLICHINELLE

Well, you'll admit the master is always to be recognized because he walks ahead...

ARGENTINA

Yes...

POLICHINELLE

Well, at night, after dark, it's my duty to walk ahead with the torch and light the way. Therefore, it follows that I am the master.

VIRGINIO

Sound logic.

ARGENTINA

Just think, Virginio, in America you'll be master without having won any victories.

POLICHINELLE

Victories! Ha! I just say the Capitano's won them to make him feel good. The only battle he ever fought was an accident. He ran the wrong way trying to get off the battlefield and landed right smack dab in the middle of the enemy.

ARGENTINA

Oh?

POLICHINELLE

Yeah, sometimes he likes to brag about that--but I can brag as well as he does, I'll bet. I can put my hands on my hips, too, and walk around looking like a wide armed vase. I can scorn everyone I meet with a twirl of the moustache--of course, I'd have to grow one first.

VIRGINIO

That wouldn't be hard.

POLICHINELLE

I would be so terrifying that everybody would surrender, and just like the Capitano, the only victories I'd have to win would be over flies.

ARGENTINA

Yes, you'd make a fine master. He certainly would, wouldn't he, Virginio?

VIRGINIO

Yes, indeed, and besides, what future is there in being a servant?

POLICHINELLE

You're right! There really isn't much hope for advancement. Once a servant, always a servant! And come to think of it, the Capitano hasn't even lived up to his part of the bargain as master, so I have a perfect right to resign.

ARGENTINA

What bargain was that?

POLICHINELLE

When I came to work for him, he agreed to dress me and nourish me. The devil take me if he's observed the hundredth part of that. Every time I've wakened in the morning, I've been forced to dress myself. Furthermore, I have been obliged to go to the trouble of putting my fingers in the dish of food and carrying them to my mouth. I have endured too much!

ARGENTINA

That's for certain!

VIRGINIO

Yes, indeed!

ARGENTINA

Too bad you aren't going to America too.

VIRGINIO

Yes, it's a shame.

POLICHINELLE

America would be just the place to get ahead.

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

And he needs one, if anyone does.

POLICHINELLE

You don't suppose, I, no, I...

ARGENTINA

What?

VIRGINIO

What, what?

POLICHINELLE

Well, I have the Capitano's purse...

ARGENTINA & VIRGINIO

You do?

POLICHINELLE

It was supposed to pay for the food at the Inn. He owes me back wages for a great many months, too. I was just thinking...

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

Incredible.

POLICHINELLE

I was just thinking, you might consider taking some, and changing places with me.

(He suggests this meekly and the two plotters play the game.)

ARGENTINA

How could you?

VIRGINIO

The idea...

ARGENTINA

I'm shocked...

VIRGINIO

Do you take me for a man without scruple, a man of no principle? If you think that any amount of money could pay for the honor of this trip...

POLICHINELLE

I'm sorry, I should have known better.

ARGENTINA

He's sorry.

VIRGINIO

Do you really think he is?

POLICHINELLE

Oh, I am!

ARGENTINA

I guess maybe he is.

VIRGINIO

Well, he's always been a good fellow...

ARGENTINA

True blue.

VIRGINIO

I really hate to give up this honor...

ARGENTINA

But, it's for a good cause, and besides, our ten minutes are almost up.

VIRGINIO

Because you have shown yourself a valiant and worthy man, I will trade places with you. Here, help me out of this sack, will you?

POLICHINELLE

Oh, thank you, thank you, Virginio, and you, too, Argentina. I'll never forget this favor, never. Never until the day I die will I forget this kindness to me. Here, at least let me pay you something.

VIRGINIO

No, no. I couldn't--

(He eyes the money.)

I couldn't take more than twenty ducats.

(He takes them.)

Thank you.

POLICHINELLE

Now help me inside the sack.

VIRGINIO

With pleasure.

ARGENTINA

Gladly.

VIRGINIO

There we are. You'd better put your head inside, too, for when there's a substitution this always makes the ceremony more effective.

POLICHINELLE

All right.

ARGENTINA

I hear voices.

VIRGINIO

And I'm off to the dock.

(He bounds off stage left, dragging the sack behind him.)

PANTALONE

(Enters)

Well, I'm ready. Come along, Judge.

(The JUDGE enters with a plate of spaghetti which he eats during the remainder of the play.)

GRATIANO

(Enters)

Here I am, now we can begin.

ALANZO

(Enters)

All right, I'm here. Start the ceremony.

ISABELLA

(Enters)

Here I am, everyone. Is the groom here?

ALANZO

Here!

PANTALONE

Here!

GRATIANO

Here!

ALANZO

You?

PANTALONE

You?

GRATIANO

You?

ISABELLA

No, I guess he isn't. I don't see him.

ALANZO

What?

GRATIANO

What?

PANTALONE

What?

ISABELLA

But, here he comes.

(CAPITANO MURIELLO SPAVENTO enters from stage left.)

MURIELLO

Hello! Hello!

(All are amazed.)

I finally found the Judge's home, but he was out, and when I passed the dock...

ARGENTINA

(Afraid he has seen something)

Uph...

MURIELLO

When I passed the dock a messenger asked me where Isabella lived. When I said that I was going to her home, he gave me this letter, so here you are, dear lady.

ISABELLA

Isn't he gallant? Thank you. And now I think is the time to tell everyone. This is my chosen one, my groom.

ALANZO

(Finally able to speak)

That's my twin! I can't believe it. Where did he come from?

PANTALONE & GRATIANO

(They sit simultaneously.)

My gosh!

MURIELLO

(They embrace.)

Alanzo! My brother!

ISABELLA

(To ALANZO, PANTALONE, GRATIANO)

Well, aren't you going to wish us luck?

MURIELLO

What for?

ISABELLA

Our marriage.

MURIELLO

Our marriage? Yours and mine? To each other?

ISABELLA

Yes.

MURIELLO

When?

ISABELLA

Now.

MURIELLO

Now?

ISABELLA

Yes.

MURIELLO

I'm speechless. I'm overcome, with joy, of course. How did you know that the moment I looked into your eyes, it was love. Isn't this a stroke of luck, brother?

ISABELLA

Perhaps it was because I, too, felt the irresistable arrows of love pierce my heart. But, now, let's get on with the ceremony so my love and I can be alone.

MURIELLO

For ever alone. For our honeymoon we shall go to sea.

ISABELLA

Oh, my gracious, how wonderful. I'm so happy.

(To others)

And I just know that you are happy for us, too. You are going to wish us good luck?

ALANZO

Yeah, good luck.

GRATIANO

(Halfheartedly)

Luck.

PANTALONE

(Halfheartedly)

Luck.

ISABELLA

Thank you. Now, let's proceed with the ceremony.

JUDGE

It is with...

ARGENTINA

Wait!

JUDGE

What for?

ARGENTINA

Point of information. If a man is convicted of a crime, and he can find someone else to take his place for the punishment, the convicted man can go free. Isn't that the rule?

JUDGE

Yes, but what has this...

ARGENTINA

(To audience)

Good thing I thought of that.

(To VIRGINIO who is off left)

Come here, Virginio.

ALL

Virginio? What is he doing free? What's going on?

VIRGINIO

(Entering)

Hello, everyone. I'm certainly glad you're all so happy to see me.

ALANZO

Why aren't you on the ship to America?

VIRGINIO

Well, you see, it's like this. I hadn't done my good deed for the day, so when Polichinelle pleaded to trade places with me, who was I to refuse?

ALANZO

Trade places with you? Polichinelle?

VIRGINIO

That's right. He's now on his way to America.

ARGENTINA

And Virginio is on his way to becoming a married man. My groom.

PANTALONE & GRATIANO

(They sit again.)

My gosh!

ALANZO

(Still can't believe)

My Polichinelle?

ARGENTINA

That's right. Your former servant, Polichinelle.

ALANZO

But, he can't be, he had my purse!

(He runs toward the docks, calling.)

Polichinelle! Stop the ship! My purse! Help! Polichinelle!

VIRGINIO

(To ARGENTINA)

You mean, you really will have me for a husband? Really?

ARGENTINA

You bet I will! You said you loved me.

VIRGINIO

Whoopee! I've got Argentina, the courage, and the money. Hot diggity! We have fifty golden ducats. That's enough to get started, and I'll make more and more.

PANTALONE & GRATIANO

(To audience)

Not on us, he won't.

ARGENTINA

I know you will.

VIRGINIO

Maybe not right away, but in the end I'll give you what you most desire.

ARGENTINA

I know you will.

ISABELLA

Isn't that sweet. All right, Judge, let's begin again. Now we can have a double wedding.

JUDGE

It is with a great deal of...

FLAMINIA

(Enters from the Inn, wearing her wedding gown.)

Wait! Papa, Papa!

(She runs to PANTALONE and whispers in his ear. He nods.)

PANTALONE

Judge, you've no objection to a triple wedding have you? It saves time, you know,

(To audience)

not to mention the money.

JUDGE

Why, the m-more the m-merrier.

(He begins the final song.)
 What could be better than one true love?
 Two true loves, two true loves.
 What could be better than two true loves?
 Three true loves.

PANTALONE

(To audience)
 It seems everyone is getting married but the Doctor and me.
 Now my daughter has chosen a groom, too.

FLAMINIA

(She leads a staggering MARIO from the Inn.
 After putting him in line with the other
 grooms who hold him up, she takes her place
 with the brides.)
 We've forgiven each other for everything.

GRATIANO

Well, what do you know? I give you my blessing, son.

MARIO

(Hiccups)
 Thanks.

PANTALONE

I give you my blessing, daughter.

FLAMINIA

Thank you, Papa.

PANTALONE

I guess there's no hope for us, Doctor.

GRATIANO

I suspect that you're right.

FLAMINIA

Let the ceremony begin.

JUDGE

It is with pleasure...

ISABELLA

(She has been reading the message that
 MURIELLO delivered earlier.)
 Wait...

JUDGE

Aw, come on!

ISABELLA

I've just received word that my two unmarried, beautiful, wealthy, younger sisters are coming for a visit, and I will be on my honeymoon. What am I going to do?

GRATIANO

(Exchanges a glance with PANTALONE)

Two?

PANTALONE

Unmarried?

GRATIANO

Beautiful?

PANTALONE

Wealthy?

GRATIANO

Younger?

PANTALONE

Sisters?

GRATIANO

Are coming?

PANTALONE

For a visit?

ISABELLA

Yes.

PANTALONE

Well, the Doctor and I...

GRATIANO

That is to say, Pantalone and I would be...

PANTALONE

More than happy...

GRATIANO

To take care of them...

PANTALONE

Until you returned.

ISABELLA

You would? Well, aren't you the sweetest things. Then we have no more problems, have we? Let the ceremony begin.

JUDGE

Finally!

It is with pleasure I'm here today,
I'm here to say,

(He continues to sing)

What could be better than one true love?

Two true loves, two true loves.

What could be better than two true loves?

Three true loves.

(To the grooms)

Do you take these women for the rest of your lives,
To be your lawfully wedded wives?

GROOMS

We do, we do, we do!

JUDGE

(To brides)

Do you take these men for the rest of your lives,
As husbands, till your last hour arrives?

BRIDES

We do, we do, we do!

JUDGE

Exchange your rings and kiss.

A Mrs. is now each Miss.

I now pronounce you men and spouses.

Get you off to your own little houses.

Now that each is groom and bride

You can be alone inside.

You're all at last forever wed,

Up the aisle you've each been led.

ALL

What could be better than one true love?

Two true loves, two true loves!

What could be better than two true loves?

Three true loves.

VIRGINIO

(Steps forward and addresses the audience)

The love affairs that started out as tangled up spaghetti,

(He pulls out the spaghetti used in the
prologue.)

All straightened out, and ended up in handfuls of confetti!

(Everyone throws confetti.)

ALL

We're all at last, forever wed.

Up the aisle we've each been led.

Good night, good night,

Good night, good night, good night,

And so to bed!

(They all bow as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

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BIOGRAPHY

Allan Richard Maar was born in Buffalo, New York, and there received his elementary and high school education. He attended the State University of New York, College for Teachers at Buffalo, from which he was graduated in 1955 with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education.

His training in theatre was received through participation in numerous high school and college play productions, attendance in classes at the Studio Theatre School of Buffalo, activity in theatrical endeavors of church youth organizations, work in summer stock, and association with theatrical presentations under the sponsorship of the Buffalo Society of Natural Science.

Since beginning graduate study at Michigan State University, Mr. Maar has worked with the Department of Speech as a graduate assistant, and has been a cast member in MSU dramatic productions. He has directed two one-act plays in the University Studio Theatre.

Early attempts at playwriting include the arrangement of material for puppet performances, as well as Christmas and "special occasion" presentations in church youth organizations. Further experience and training in compo-

sition were acquired as an undergraduate at S. U. N. Y. where Mr. Maar was a member of Sigma Upsilon, the Honorary Literary Fraternity. In addition to writing short stories and one-act plays, he has written several scripts which were produced on WBEN-TV in Buffalo, New York.

True Love and Spaghetti is his first full-length play.

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