

Mirandolina



LA LOCANDIERA

Mirandolina

IN this play, first performed in Venice in 1753, Goldoni shows his mastery of stage-craft and characterization more fully than in any other single play. It is Goldoni's *Much Ado About Nothing*. *Mirandolina* is an eighteenth-century Beatrice. Bold, coy, tender, coquettish, indifferent, as suits her plan, she brings a young eighteenth-century Benedick to her feet. But unlike Shakespeare's Beatrice, Goldoni's *Mirandolina* condemns him to perpetual bachelorhood for having presumed to doubt the power of her sex.

Here, in the Marquis and the Count, are two perfect examples of Goldoni's skill in creating cantankerous yet likeable old men.

Following the precedent of some modern Italian editions of this play, two very minor characters, the foreign actresses, have been omitted. The few scenes in which they appear delay the action and are not needed. Goldoni appears to have introduced them to ridicule the characters and dialogue of the old Comedy.

Characters

THE MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI

THE COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA

FABRIZIO, a Servant at the Inn

THE BARON RIPAFRATTA

MIRANDOLINA, the Mistress of the Inn

THE BARON'S SERVANT

The action of the play takes place in Mirandolina's Inn at Florence.

Act One

SCENE I

The guests' sitting-room at the Inn.

THE MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI and the COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA.

MARQUIS: Between you and me there's quite a difference.

COUNT: At this Inn my money's as good as yours.

MARQUIS: The mistress of the Inn doesn't seem to think so. She gives me far better service.

COUNT: What makes you think that?

MARQUIS: I am the Marquis of Forlipopoli.

COUNT: And I am the Count of Albafiiorita.

MARQUIS: Exactly. Counts are two a penny.

COUNT: So are Marquises with no money.

MARQUIS: That's enough! I am I! And I'm accustomed to being treated with respect!

COUNT: Yes! Everybody must treat you with respect. But *you* can treat everybody as you damn well please!

MARQUIS: I am staying at this Inn because I am in love with its mistress. Everybody knows that. And so I expect everybody to refrain from pestering a young lady who meets with my approval.

COUNT: Here we go again! Hands off Mirandolina! Just what d'you imagine keeps me here in Florence! Why d'you suppose I'm staying at this Inn?

MARQUIS: Oh, I know what you're up to. You haven't a chance.

COUNT: And you have?

MARQUIS: Yes, I have, and you haven't. I am I. My protection is what Mirandolina needs.

COUNT: What Mirandolina needs is money.

MARQUIS: I've enough of that.

COUNT: Ten ducats a day is what I spend here. *And I give her a present every day.*

MARQUIS: *And I don't need to boast what I spend.*

COUNT: Everybody's got a good idea.

MARQUIS: Oh, no, they haven't.

COUNT: Oh, yes, they have. Servants talk, my dear Marquis. Three ducats a day, isn't it, my dear Marquis?

MARQUIS: That servant Fabrizio! Can't stand him. Seems to me our hostess has a soft spot for the fellow.

COUNT: Maybe she's thinking of marrying him. Now that wouldn't be a bad idea. Her father's been dead six months and this Inn's too much for a young woman on her own. As a matter of fact, I've promised her three hundred ducats if she'll get married.

MARQUIS: If she gets married I'm the one who'll protect her and who'll . . . well, I know how to go about it!

COUNT: Look, why not let's arrange it as between friends? We'll both give her three hundred and share and share alike.

MARQUIS: What I do I don't share with others. I am I. And I don't need to boast about it. [*talking*] Ho, there! Anybody there?

COUNT [*to himself*]: There's no pride like that of a poor man!

[FABRIZIO enters.]

FABRIZIO [*to the Marquis*]: You called signore?

MARQUIS: Signore? Who are you calling 'signore'?

FABRIZIO: I beg your pardon.

COUNT [*to FABRIZIO*]: Tell me, how is our hostess?

FABRIZIO: Very well, Illustrious.

MARQUIS: Is she out of bed yet?

FABRIZIO: Yes, Illustrious.

MARQUIS: You stupid ass!

FABRIZIO: Why, Illustrious?

MARQUIS: Who are you calling 'Illustrious'?

FABRIZIO: It's what I called this other gentleman.

MARQUIS: Between him and me there's quite a difference.

FABRIZIO [*to himself*]: Yes, between his tips and yours.

MARQUIS: Tell your mistress to come to me. I wish to speak to her.

FABRIZIO: Very well, Excellency. Have I got it right this time?

MARQUIS: You have. And about time too. I've been staying here three months now. Dumb insolence, that's what it is. FABRIZIO: I'm always ready to oblige, Excellency.

COUNT [*to FABRIZIO*]: Would you like to see the real difference between the Marquis and me?

MARQUIS: What are you up to now?

COUNT [*to FABRIZIO*]: Here's a zecchino for you. Now try and get one from him.

FABRIZIO [*to the COUNT*]: Thank you, Illustrious. [*to the MARQUIS*] Excellency . . .

MARQUIS: I don't throw money away like a fool. Get out! FABRIZIO [*to the COUNT*]: Heaven bless you, Excellency.

[*aside*] It's money not titles that counts with me. [*Exit!*]

MARQUIS [*to the COUNT*]: That sort of thing won't get you anywhere. My rank counts more than all your money.

COUNT: What can your rank buy you?

MARQUIS: That's all you can think of! What you can buy! Oh, Mirandolina has you weighed up. You'll get nowhere with her.

COUNT: Nor will you, with only your title. You don't get anywhere without money.

MARQUIS: Money? Poof! It's rank that inspires obedience and bestows protection.

COUNT: Can rank give somebody three hundred ducats?

MARQUIS: Rank inspires respect!

COUNT: Money buys respect!

MARQUIS: You don't know what you're talking about!

COUNT: And I suppose you think you do!

[*The BARON enters.*]

BARON: Well, well, what a to-do! Having a quarrel - friends?

COUNT: We are arguing a rather fine point.

MARQUIS [*ironically*]: The Count presumes to argue with me over the importance of rank.

COUNT: I was not denying the importance of rank. I simply maintain it's money that makes life easier.

BARON: Actually, my dear Marquis . . .

MARQUIS: Let us talk of something else.

BARON: But what on earth started such an argument?

COUNT: Oh, something quite ridiculous.

MARQUIS: Yes, the Count makes everything ridiculous.

COUNT: His Excellency the Marquis is in love with our hostess. So am I, of course. Only more so. He thinks his rank will cause his affection to be returned. I hope to be rewarded for certain little attentions I give. A ridiculous matter to argue about, don't you agree?

MARQUIS: He refuses to realize the powerful protection my rank can give her.

COUNT [*to the BARON*]: He offers protection. I offer money.

BARON: Was there anything ever less worth arguing about! To argue over a woman! To upset yourselves over a woman! A woman? I can't believe it. Over a woman? Well, one thing's certain: that's something I'll never be in danger of arguing over. Women are by nature stupid, selfish, and dogmatic. The great tragedy of life is that they've made themselves indispensable. To put it plainly women bore me utterly, absolutely, and completely.

MARQUIS: All the same, Mirandolina is a woman quite out of the ordinary.

COUNT: For once the Marquis is right. The mistress of this Inn is the most charming woman I have ever met.

MARQUIS: Of course I'm right. If I'm in love with her she must be charming - quite out of the ordinary.

BARON: This is beginning to amuse me. How is she so out of the ordinary?

MARQUIS: She has charm. Quite natural, mind you. Bred in the bone. That's what makes her out of the ordinary. Charm.

COUNT: In other words she's pretty, speaks well, dresses neatly, and has perfect taste.

BARON: Are we talking of the same woman? I've been at this Inn three days and that's not how she's impressed me.

COUNT: Have a close look at her then.

BARON: I've seen her close enough, thank you. She's like any other woman.

MARQUIS: She is not like any other woman. Allow me to inform you, sir, I have known the finest ladies in the land. And never - never, sir - have I met one with her modesty and charm. Such a combination, sir, is something quite out of the ordinary.

COUNT: By gad, yes! I flatter myself I know how to get my way with the ladies. I know their little weaknesses. But this one's different. I've gone to the limit in presents, courtesies, attentions - and dammit I haven't even touched her hand yet.

BARON: So that's it! She's leading you both up the garden path, you poor fools. Women? They're all the same. I'd like to see her try it on me.

COUNT: Have you never been in love?

BARON: Never. And never will. Oh, some have tried their damndest to marry me. They could have saved themselves the trouble.

MARQUIS: But, dammit, man, don't you want a son to carry on your name?

BARON: Yes, I have thought of that, quite often. But then I always remember that to have a son you need a wife.

COUNT: What will you do with your money?

BARON: Have a good time - with my friends.

MARQUIS: Bravo, Baron! Bravo! We'll help you.

COUNT: And women will get nothing of it?

BARON: Absolutely nothing. They won't fatten themselves on me.

COUNT: Here's our hostess. Now look and see if she isn't adorable.

BARON: Oh, marvellous! But give me a good hunting-dog.

MARQUIS: Well, if you don't appreciate her, I do.

BARON: You could have her even if she were as beautiful as Venus.

[MIRANDOLINA *enters*.]

MIRANDOLINA: Good morning, gentlemen. Which of you was asking for me?

MARQUIS: I was asking for you. But not in here.

MIRANDOLINA: Where do you want me, Excellency?

MARQUIS: In my room.

MIRANDOLINA: In your room? If you need anything, kindly call the waiter.

MARQUIS [*aside to the BARON*]: Charming modesty!

BARON [*aside to the MARQUIS*]: Damned impertinence!

COUNT: Dear Mirandolina, I will speak to you in public. I won't put you to the inconvenience of coming to my room. Examine these ear-rings. You like them?

MIRANDOLINA: They're quite nice.

COUNT: They are diamonds, you know.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, I *can* tell diamonds when I see them.

COUNT: They're yours.

BARON [*aside to the COUNT*]: My dear fellow, have some sense.

MIRANDOLINA: Why do you wish to give me them?

MARQUIS [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: They're not worth having. You have others twice as beautiful.

COUNT: They are mounted in the latest fashion. Please accept them, with my love.

BARON [*aside*]: He's mad!

MIRANDOLINA: Oh no really, signore . . .

COUNT: If you don't take them, I shall be offended.

MIRANDOLINA: Well, in that case . . . since I value the friendship of my guests . . . yes, so as not to offend *you*, Count, I will take them.

BARON [*aside*]: The little devil!

COUNT [*aside to the BARON*]: What a ready wit, eh?

BARON [*aside to the COUNT*]: Too damn ready! She grabbed them without even thanking you.

MARQUIS: Truly, Count, you are surpassing yourself. To give a present to a lady in public! Out of pure vanity! Mirandolina, I really must speak with you privately. Something quite confidential. Oh, and quite honourable.

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: And with nothing in it for me,

you stingy old miser. [*loud*] If that is all, gentlemen, I will retire.

BARON [*contemptuously*]: One moment, mistress. The linen sheets in my room are not good enough. If you have no better, I will provide my own.

MIRANDOLINA: I can provide better, signore. And, signore, though I am your servant I think you could address me a little more politely.

BARON: You take my money. Must you have compliments thrown in as well?

COUNT [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: Be patient with him. He's the arch-enemy of all women.

BARON: Her patience or otherwise, is a matter of complete indifference to me.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, poor us! What *can* we have done to you? Why are you so cruel to us, Signor Baron?

BARON: That's enough. Don't try to be familiar with me. Have the linen changed. I will send my servant for it. [*changing to a more friendly tone*] My friends - we will meet later. [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA: What a brute! I never saw anything like it! COUNT: Ah, dear Mirandolina, it is not everybody who can appreciate your charms.

MIRANDOLINA: No, truly, he has upset me very much. I shall ask him to find lodgings elsewhere. At once!

MARQUIS: Good! And if he's awkward about it, let me know. I'll have him out dam' quick. Make use of my protection, my dear.

COUNT: And don't you worry about losing what he pays you. I'll make it up. I'll pay double. [*aside*] Treble - if it would get rid of the Marquis as well.

MIRANDOLINA: Thank you, gentlemen, thank you. I am quite capable of turning anybody out of my Inn. As for money, I never have an empty room for long.

[FABRIZIO *enters*.]

FABRIZIO [*to the COUNT*]: Illustrious, someone is asking for you.

COUNT: D'you know who it is?

FABRIZIO: A jeweller, I think. [*aside to MIRANDOLINA*]
Mirandolina, don't stay in here.

COUNT: Ah, yes, of course. He has a jewel he wants to show me. Mirandolina, those ear-rings need something to go with them.

MIRANDOLINA: Now really, you mustn't, Signor Count . . .
COUNT: No, no, you must have the best. Money's no object with me. I'll go and have a look at this jewel. I shan't be a moment, Mirandolina. Until later, Marquis. [*Exit*]
MARQUIS [*aside*]: Damn and blast him and his money!

MIRANDOLINA: Really, the Signor Count goes to too much trouble.

[*The MARQUIS takes a fine silk handkerchief from his pocket, unfolds it and makes as if to dab his forehead.*]

MIRANDOLINA: What a pretty handkerchief!

MARQUIS: It is rather fine, don't you think? Yes, I have good taste.

MIRANDOLINA: Indeed you have.

MARQUIS: It comes from London.

MIRANDOLINA: No! Really?

MARQUIS [*folding up the handkerchief carefully*]: It must be folded properly so that it does not crease. Things of this sort should be taken great care of. [*He offers it to MIRANDOLINA.*] Take it.

MIRANDOLINA: You want me to have it put in your room?

MARQUIS: No, in yours.

MIRANDOLINA: In mine? Why?

MARQUIS: Because I'm giving it you.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, but really, your Excellency. . . .

MARQUIS: Not a word now. It's yours.

MIRANDOLINA: But I couldn't. . . .

MARQUIS: Now don't make me angry.

MIRANDOLINA: Your Excellency knows I don't like to offend anyone. Well . . . so that you won't be angry, I'll accept it.

[*The COUNT enters.*]

MARQUIS: Ah, here's the Count. [*softly to MIRANDOLINA*]
Show it to him.

MIRANDOLINA [*showing the handkerchief to the COUNT*]: Look, Count. See what a lovely present the Marquis has given me.
MARQUIS: Oh, it's nothing. A mere trifle. Put it away. I'd rather you didn't show it to people. I don't want everybody knowing what I do.

MIRANDOLINA [*aside, putting the handkerchief in her pocket*]: He doesn't want it known, but he makes me show it.

COUNT [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: If the Marquis will permit, I should like a word with you.

MARQUIS [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: That handkerchief will get all creased in your pocket like that.

MIRANDOLINA: I'll wrap it up in cotton wool. It won't get crushed then.

COUNT [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: You see this little diamond?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, isn't that beautiful!

COUNT: How would that go with the ear-rings I gave you?

MIRANDOLINA: But it's even more beautiful than they are.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: Damn this Count, his diamonds, his money - and the devil that possesses him!

COUNT: Yes, it will put the finishing touch to those ear-rings. That's why I'm giving it to you.

MIRANDOLINA: But I simply can't take it.

COUNT: You'll offend me, if you don't.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, dear, I hate to give offence. Well . . . so you won't be offended, I'll take it. What do you think, Marquis? Isn't it a beautiful diamond?

MARQUIS: Of it's kind, that handkerchief is finer.

COUNT: Rather a big difference in kind, I should say.

MARQUIS: That's it! At it again! Boasting in public of what you spend.

COUNT: Oh, of course, you make your gifts in secret.

MARQUIS: I'll make you pay for this!

COUNT: Now what are you grumbling about?

MARQUIS: You know quite well. I am I! And I won't be treated in this way. Mirandolina, take great care of that handkerchief. Handkerchiefs of that quality are very rare.

Diamonds are easily come by. But not handkerchiefs like that.

COUNT [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: You know that what I do is done for you. My heart and all my wealth are yours. Use them as you wish. For you are their mistress. [*Exit*]

MARQUIS: Some people have got to make a show of their money! The big I-am! Oh, I know his type. I've seen something of the world, I have.

MIRANDOLINA: So also have I.

MARQUIS: They think women of your sort can be had at the expense of a few gifts.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, a few gifts never did me any harm.

MARQUIS: I would think it an insult to you - to give you presents and put you under an obligation to me.

MIRANDOLINA: There is no danger of that from you, Signor Marquis.

MARQUIS: I would never insult you in such a way.

MIRANDOLINA: I'm quite sure you wouldn't.

MARQUIS: But otherwise I am yours to command.

MIRANDOLINA: Otherwise?

MARQUIS: Try me?

MIRANDOLINA: You give me an example.

MARQUIS: Damn - you're a teasing little devil!

MIRANDOLINA: Now you're making me blush, your Excellency.

MARQUIS: To hell with 'your Excellency'! By gad, I could make a fool of myself over you!

MIRANDOLINA: How, signore?

MARQUIS: If only I were simply a Count like that fellow.

MIRANDOLINA: Because of his money?

MARQUIS: Money? To hell with his money! No, if only I were a fiddling little Count I'd . . .

MIRANDOLINA: Yes? What would you do?

MARQUIS: Marry you, blast it! [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA [*alone*]: Huh! Marry him! His Excellency Signor the Marquis Skinflint! That would be the day! The husbands I'd have, if I'd married all that had wanted to marry me! They've only got to enter this Inn and they fall

in love with me and think they can marry me on the spot. Except this Signor Baron, the ill-mannered lout! What right's he got to think himself too high and mighty to be civil to me? Nobody else who's ever stopped at this Inn has ever treated me so! I certainly don't expect him to fall in love with me at first sight - but to behave like that! That sort of thing infuriates me. So he hates women? Doesn't want anything to do with them? The poor fool. He hasn't met the woman yet who knows how to set about him. But he will. Oh, yes, he will, all right. And, who knows if he hasn't just met her. Yes, this fellow might be exactly what I need. I'm sick to death of men who run after me. As for marriage - there's plenty of time for that. I want to enjoy my freedom first. And here's a chance to really enjoy it. Yes, I'll use every art I have to conquer this enemy of women!

[FABRIZIO enters.]

FABRIZIO: Hoy! Mistress!

MIRANDOLINA: What is it?

FABRIZIO: That fellow in the middle room is complaining about his linen.

MIRANDOLINA: I know, I know. He told me. I'll see to it.

FABRIZIO: Very well. Show me what to take him.

MIRANDOLINA: No, you go along. I'll take it myself.

FABRIZIO: You want to take it him yourself?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes I, by myself.

FABRIZIO: You seem to think a lot of this fellow.

MIRANDOLINA: No more than any of the others. Get off with you.

FABRIZIO [*to himself*]: I'd best face up to it. She's only been leading me on. Nothing can ever come of it.

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: Poor lad! He's fallen too. I want to keep him hoping because he's so faithful.

FABRIZIO: It's always been understood I wait on the guests.

MIRANDOLINA: You're a little too off-hand with them.

FABRIZIO: And you're a little too obliging.

MIRANDOLINA: I know what I'm doing. I don't need anyone to tell me.

FABRIZIO: All right. Find yourself another waiter then.

MIRANDOLINA: Why - Signor Fabrizio! Have you had enough of me?

FABRIZIO: May I recall to you what your father said to both of us - just before he died?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes. And when I decide to get married, I will not forget what my father said.

FABRIZIO: It's just that I'm very easily hurt. And some things I can't stand.

MIRANDOLINA: What d'you think I am? An empty-headed little flirt? I thought you knew me better than that! How d'you expect me to behave with guests who are here today and gone tomorrow? If I treat them well, that's in my own interest, for the good name of my Inn. I've no need of their presents. And if I want to make love, one's enough for me and I have him already. I know when I'm well off, and when I want to marry. . . . I shall remember my father's wishes. And those who serve me well, won't regret it. I know how to be grateful. I know he who deserves rewarding . . . but I am not known.* There, Fabrizio. Do understand me. If you can. [*Exit*]

FABRIZIO [*alone*]: It needs a cleverer man than I to understand her. One minute she wants me, the next she doesn't want me. She says she's not a flirt, yet she wants to act like

* This is a literal rendering of the original and it puzzled me considerably. My reading of the whole speech in which it occurs makes me feel that Goldoni's meaning is that Mirandolina is telling Fabrizio that she is not known sexually. The whole speech shows clearly that she is very upset by Fabrizio's reproaches - in fact it is the only time in the play that her defences are down. My reading therefore is that Goldoni knows she is in love with Fabrizio but she does not know it herself. This is borne out by the non-sequiturs in her speech. This speech and her soliloquy towards the end of the play when she makes up her mind to marry Fabrizio are the only speeches in the play in which Goldoni uses dotted lines . . . to convey perturbation.

Other translations of this line do not make it more comprehensible.

Lady Gregory translates it as:

'I know him but he doesn't know me' [omitting Goldoni's dotted line].

And Clifford Bax translates it as:

'I appreciate true worth . . . but I am not appreciated myself'.

[Translator]

one. I don't know what to do. Best wait and see. I like her, I want her. We'd get on well together. I'll shut one eye and let things take their course. As she said, the guests are here today and gone tomorrow. I'm always here. I'll get the best of the bargain in the end. [*Exit*]

★ SCENE 2 ★

[*The Baron's room: the BARON and his SERVANT.*]

SERVANT: This letter has arrived for you, Illustrious.

BARON: Bring me my chocolate. [*The servant goes out. The Baron opens the letter and reads*] 'Siena, the first of January, 1753' - Him, who can it be from? Ah, Orazio Taccagni - 'My dear friend. The tender friendship I have for you urges me to warn you that your return home is imperative. The Count Mann is dead . . . ? Poor Mann! I am sorry. 'He has left an only daughter of marriageable age, heiress to one hundred and fifty thousand ducats. All your friends wish this fortune yours and are making arrangements. . . . ' They needn't trouble themselves on my behalf. They know well enough my views on marriage. And this dear friend better than any of them. Yet he pesters me the most. [*He tears up the letter.*] What are one hundred and fifty thousand ducats to me? On my own I can manage on far less. If I weren't on my own, they wouldn't be nearly enough. A wife for me? I'd rather the plague.

[*The MARQUIS enters.*]

MARQUIS: Friend, d'you mind if I keep you company a moment?

BARON: The honour is mine.

MARQUIS: Yes, you and I speak the same language. Not like that fool of a Count.

BARON: Allow me to differ, my dear Marquis. You should respect others, if you wish to be respected yourself.

MARQUIS: Oh, come, you know me. I'm courteous to everybody. It's just that I can't stand that fellow.

BARON: You can't stand him because he's your rival in love. You should be ashamed of yourself. A nobleman like you in love with the mistress of an inn! An experienced man of the world like you running after a woman!

MARQUIS: Baron, that woman has cast a spell on me.

BARON: Don't talk rubbish! D'you think she uses witchcraft? What you want to ask yourself is, why don't women ever cast their spell on me? I'll tell you why. Because I keep them at a distance and don't give them a chance to use their charms on me.

MARQUIS: Maybe you're right. The trouble is I've something else on my mind. The fellow who looks after my estates for me.

BARON: What's he done?

MARQUIS: Words fail me, my dear chap.

[*The Baron's servant enters carrying a cup of chocolate.*]

BARON: That sounds bad. [*To the servant*] Make another cup at once.

SERVANT: There isn't any more, Illustrious. They've run out of chocolate.

BARON: Then they'd better get some. [*To the Marquis*] If you would care to accept this. . . .

[*The Marquis takes the chocolate without thanks and begins to drink and talk at the same time.*]

MARQUIS: As I was saying, this bailiff of mine. . . . [*He drinks*]

BARON [*aside*]: So I go without.

MARQUIS: He'd promised to send me. . . . [*He drinks.*] . . . twenty zecchini. . . . [*He drinks.*]

BARON [*aside*]: Here it comes.

MARQUIS: And he's not sent them. [*He drinks.*]

BARON: Oh, they may have been delayed.

MARQUIS: The point is. . . . [*He finishes the drink*]

Take it away. [*He gives the cup to the servant who goes out.*] The point is I'm rather in debt and I don't know what to do.

BARON: A few days is neither here nor there. . . .

MARQUIS: Being a nobleman yourself, you know what it means to keep one's word. I'm in debt, and - well - it's damned embarrassing.

BARON: I'm sorry things are so bad. [*aside*] This is going to be awkward.

MARQUIS: Would it make things difficult for yourself to help me out, only for a few days?

BARON: My dear Marquis, I would if I could, with pleasure. If I had any money, you could have it here and now. I happen to be waiting for some myself.

MARQUIS: You don't expect me to believe you haven't a penny on you?

BARON: Look for yourself. That's all I have. It doesn't come to two zecchini. [*He shows a zecchino and some small change.*]

MARQUIS: You've got a whole zecchino there. . . .

BARON: Yes, my last one.

MARQUIS: Lend me that. It'll help. . . .

BARON: But what about me?

MARQUIS: What are you frightened of? I'll pay it back.

BARON: There's no more to say, then. Take it. [*He gives him the zecchino.*]

MARQUIS [*taking the zecchino*]: I have some urgent business to attend to, dear friend, so for the moment, many thanks.

We'll see one another at dinner. [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: That's good! The Marquis tries to do me out of twenty zecchini and then is glad to get away with one. Well - one's neither here nor there to me, and if he doesn't pay it back he won't dare bother me again. What does annoy me is his drinking my chocolate. The fellow's no manners. And next minute it'll be: 'I am I! I am a nobleman, I am I!' Oh, yes, a most noble nobleman!

[*MIRANDOLINA enters carrying the linen sheets.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*entering with affected timidity*]: May I come in, Illustrious?

BARON [*sharply*]: What d'you want?

MIRANDOLINA [*advancing a little*]: I've brought some better linen.

BARON [*pointing to the table*]: Good. Put it there.

MIRANDOLINA: May I beg you to put yourself to the trouble of seeing whether you consider it is satisfactory?

BARON: What's it made of?

MIRANDOLINA [*advancing a little further*]: The sheets are cambric.

BARON: Cambric?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, signore. Ten paoli a yard. You see?

BARON: But I didn't mean anything as good as that. All I want is something better than I've been given.

MIRANDOLINA: This sort of linen was made for persons of quality, for those who will appreciate it. To be quite candid, Illustrious, I've brought it only because you are you. I wouldn't think of giving it to certain other people.

BARON: 'Because you are you'! The usual flattery.

MIRANDOLINA: Have a look at this table-cloth.

BARON: But that's the finest Flanders cloth! If you wash it, it loses its quality. There's no need to dirty that on my account.

MIRANDOLINA: For a nobleman like yourself, I don't bother over such trifles. I have several of these cloths and I will reserve them for your Most Illustrious Excellency.

BARON [*aside*]: There's no denying, she's a very obliging woman.

MIRANDOLINA [*aside*]: No wonder women don't please him if he always looks so grumpy.

BARON: Give the linen to my servant, or put it down there somewhere. There was no need to go to so much trouble about it.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, but nothing is too much trouble, when I'm serving a nobleman of such quality.

BARON: Yes, fine, that will be all then. [*aside*] Flattery, that's all it is. Women! They're all the same.

MIRANDOLINA: I'll put it in the cupboard.

BARON [*thoughtfully*]: Yes, wherever you wish.

MIRANDOLINA [*aside, as she puts the linen in the cupboard*]: He's a tough one, this! I'm not getting anywhere.

BARON [*aside*]: This is how fools get taken in; they start listening to such flatteries and end up believing them.

MIRANDOLINA [*returning without the linen*]: Now what would you like for dinner?

BARON: Anything you've got.

MIRANDOLINA: No, I must know your likes and dislikes. If there's something you'd like more than anything else, you really must tell me.

BARON: If there's anything I want, I'll tell the waiter.

MIRANDOLINA: Ah, but men don't give the attention and patience to such things as we women do. What about a nice little ragout with some special sauce?

BARON: Thank you. You may have got round the Count and the Marquis like this. But you won't with me.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes! Did you ever see such a couple of spineless nincompoops? They no sooner come to lodge at an Inn than they immediately begin to make love to the mistress of the Inn. As if I haven't other things to attend to beside listening to their nonsense. Of course, I've got to make myself pleasant, engage them in some light conversation, for the good of the house. But it does make me laugh when I see they think I'm going out of my way to flatter them.

BARON: Excellent! That's the sort of plain talk I like to hear. MIRANDOLINA: Oh, I believe in saying what I think, straight out!

BARON: Ah, come, now, you must admit you do put it on a little with those two.

MIRANDOLINA: Me? Heaven forbid! With those two? Ask them if you like. Ask them if I've ever once given them a single sign of encouragement. Naturally I don't rebuff them. That would hardly be in my own interests. Though I'm sorely tempted to sometimes. I just can't bear these effeminate men. And d'you know what I detest just as much? Women who run after men! Oh, I know I'm not as young as I used to be. Nor got the looks I had once. But I've had

my chances. It's just that I've always valued my freedom too much to get married.

BARON: Yes, indeed, that's very true. One's freedom is one's greatest treasure.

MIRANDOLINA: And so many simply throw it away like stupid fools.

BARON: I couldn't agree with you more . . . Keep your distance!

MIRANDOLINA: Are you married, Illustrious?

BARON: Me? Heaven forbid! I've no need of women.

MIRANDOLINA: Wonderful! Don't ever change! If you only knew, signore . . . but I shouldn't speak badly of my own sex.

BARON: Do you know, you're the first woman I've ever heard talk like this?

MIRANDOLINA: I'll tell you a secret. When you're the mistress of an Inn like I am - well, the things you hear! If men only knew, they've every reason to be wary of my sex. They have my sympathy.

BARON [*aside*]: What an unusual woman she is.

MIRANDOLINA [*pretending to go*]: If you will permit me, Illustrious.

BARON: Oh! . . . Must you go?

MIRANDOLINA: I don't want to seem a nuisance to you.

BARON: Not at all. You please me. You interest me.

MIRANDOLINA: There! You see, signore? This is how I'm like with the others. I chat for a few moments, I'm friendly by nature, so I make a few jokes to amuse them. Then before you know where you are, they're ready to throw themselves at my feet, imagining they're in love with me.

BARON: You can hardly help having good manners.

MIRANDOLINA [*coitseying*]: You're too kind, Illustrious.

BARON: And they really fall in love?

MIRANDOLINA: Isn't it absurd? To fall in love just like that, all at once.

BARON: That's something I never could understand.

MIRANDOLINA: How firm you are! How manly!

BARON: What weak effeminate beings they are!

MIRANDOLINA: There speaks a real man! Signor Baron, give me your hand!

BARON: My hand? What for?

MIRANDOLINA: Because it would be such an honour. Look, mine is quite clean.

BARON: All right.

MIRANDOLINA [*taking his hand*]: This is the first time I've had the honour of shaking hands with a real man.

BARON: Yes - well - that'll be enough.

MIRANDOLINA: What *would* have happened if I'd done that with those other two? They'd think I'd fallen madly in love with them! They'd have passed out on the spot! Oh, but I wouldn't let them be the least familiar, for all the gold in the world. They don't know how to behave. It's simply wonderful to be able to speak freely with someone like you, signore. Oh . . . signore! Please pardon my presumption. I let myself be carried away. But if there's anything at all I can do for you, order me to do it without hesitation. I'll do it more willingly than for anyone else in the world.

BARON: Why are you singling me out for your favours?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, it's nothing to do with your wonderful qualities as a man. Nor with your rank. It's just that I feel I can behave quite naturally with you - without wondering whether you'll take advantage of me. I know you will never forget I'm your servant, and start pestering me with ridiculous attentions.

BARON [*aside*]: How the devil this one became so out of the ordinary, I simply don't understand.

MIRANDOLINA [*aside*]: He's coming to heel, bit by bit.

BARON: Look . . . if you've other things to do . . . don't let me detain you.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, signore, I will go and look after my little household duties. It is they who are my lovers; it's they which give me joy. If there is anything you want, I'll send my servant.

BARON: Good . . . and if you can come occasionally yourself, you'll be very welcome.

MIRANDOLINA

MIRANDOLINA: To tell the truth I . . . I never enter the guests' rooms. But I'll come to yours sometimes.

BARON: Mine! . . . Why?

MIRANDOLINA: Because I do like you so very much, illustrious.

BARON: You like me?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, I like you because you're not soft and weak. You are not one of those who'd only be wanting to make love to me. [*aside*] If he isn't wanting to by tomorrow, I'll eat my hat. [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: Oh, I know what I'm doing. As for women - let them keep their distance. But this one could make me fall for her more than any. Yes, she has a certain frankness about her, an openness. Quite uncommon. Yes, quite out of the ordinary. But she won't get me falling in love with her just because of that. Still - simply to amuse myself of course - I'd rather talk to this one than any other. But fall in love? Give up my freedom? No fear! I'm not such a fool. [*Exit*]

Act Two

The Baron's room. The table and chairs are set for dinner. The Baron is walking up and down deep in a book. His servant stands by the door.

[FABRIZIO enters carrying the soup.]

FABRIZIO [*to the servant*]: Tell your master, the soup is here if he's ready to be served.

SERVANT [*to FABRIZIO*]: You tell him yourself.

FABRIZIO: I don't want my head bitten off.

SERVANT: Oh, his bark is worse than his bite. It's only women servants he's rude to. He can't stand women.

FABRIZIO: Can't stand women? The poor fool. Doesn't know what's good for him. [*He puts the soup on the table and goes.*]

SERVANT: Dinner is served, illustrious.

[*The Baron puts down his book and sits at the table.*]

BARON [*to the servant, as he begins his meal*]: It's early today.

[*The servant stands behind the Baron's chair with a plate under his arm.*]

SERVANT: This room's been served before all the others. The Count of Albariorita was shouting that he wanted to be served first, but the mistress of the Inn said you were to be, signore.

BARON: That is good of her.

SERVANT: Oh, she's a real lady, she is, signore. I've come across all sorts but never a mistress of an Inn like her. Real considerate, that's what she is.

BARON [*turning a little towards the servant*]: You like her, eh?

SERVANT: If it wasn't that I don't want to leave you, signore, I'd come here and work as a waiter for Mirandolina.

BARON: Poor fool! What good would that do you?

[*He gives the SERVANT his plate. The SERVANT hands him a clean one.*]

SERVANT: I'd follow a woman like that around like a little dog, signore. [*He goes out to fetch the next dish.*]

BARON: Good heavens, that woman puts her spell on everybody. It would be a joke if she bewitched me as well. Tomorrow I leave for Leghorn!

SERVANT [*re-entering carrying a boiled chicken and another plate*]: The mistress of the Inn says if you don't care for chicken she'll send in some pigeon.

BARON: I like anything. What's that supposed to be?

SERVANT: Oh, she particularly asked me to let her know if you liked this sauce. Because she made it with her own hands.

BARON: She's certainly out to please me. [*He tastes it*] Mm! Excellent! Tell her I like it very much indeed. And give her my thanks.

SERVANT: Yes, signore.

BARON: Now! At once.

SERVANT: Of course, signore. [*aside, as he goes out*] Incredible! A woman's pleased him at last! [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: This sauce is really exquisite. I've never tasted better. [*Goes on eating.*] If this is how Mirandolina looks after her guests she'll certainly never have an empty room. Good food, good linen. And one has to admit she's quite charming. Though what I like most is her frankness, her sincerity. Yes, that's just what most women lack. Sincerity in a woman is a fine thing.

SERVANT [*re-entering*]: She thanks your Excellency for his great kindness.

BARON: Good, good.

SERVANT: And now she's making another dish with her own hands. But I don't know what it is.

BARON: She's actually making it herself?

SERVANT: Yes, signore.

BARON: Fetch me a drink!

SERVANT [*going to sideboard to fetch bottle*]: Yes, signore.

BARON: I shall have to find some way to repay her for all this. A most remarkable woman. Yes, I'll pay double. I'll show I appreciate it. And then I'll be off to Leghorn. [*The SERVANT pours his drink.*] Has the Count had his dinner yet?

SERVANT: Yes, he has just been served, signore.

BARON: And the Marquis? Has he been served yet?

SERVANT: He was annoyed at being kept waiting and went out. He's not back yet.

BARON [*pushing away his plate*]: Right. I'm ready.

SERVANT [*taking his plate*]: Yes, signore.

[*MIRANDOLINA enters with a dish of food in her hand.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*at the door*]: May I come in?

BARON: Who is it?

SERVANT: It's -- it's your dinner, signore.

BARON [*turning round*]: Relieve the lady of that dish!

MIRANDOLINA [*putting the dish on the table*]: No, no, you must let me have the pleasure of putting it on the table with my own hands.

BARON: But you shouldn't be doing this.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, signore, who am I? One of your fine ladies? I'm the servant of any who are kind enough to stay at my Inn.

BARON [*aside*]: What modesty!

MIRANDOLINA: To tell the truth, I wouldn't mind waiting on all my guests myself. But for certain reasons I find it best not to. You'll understand what I mean, I know. Of course, I need have no doubts about your Excellency.

BARON: Thank you. What dish is this?

MIRANDOLINA: It's a little ragout I've made with my own hands.

BARON: Ah, then it will be good. If you made it, it must be.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, signore! Now you're being too kind. I don't really know how to do anything well. I only wish I did, so I could please such a fine gentleman as yourself.

BARON [*aside*]: Leghorn, tomorrow! [*aside*] If you've other things to be doing, don't let me keep you.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, there's nothing for me to do, signore. The Inn is well provided with cooks and servants. I should be glad to know if this dish is to your taste.

BARON: Certainly, I will try it. [*He tastes it.*] Wonderful! It couldn't be better. But tell me, what is it you've flavoured it with?

MIRANDOLINA: Ah, I have my secrets, signore. These hands of mine know a thing or two.

BARON [*to the SERVANT, violently*]: Get me another drink.

MIRANDOLINA: With that dish you should drink something good, signore.

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Give me some Burgundy.

MIRANDOLINA: Excellent. Burgundy's a splendid wine. In my opinion it's the best wine one can drink at dinner.

[*The SERVANT puts the bottle of wine and a glass on the table.*]

BARON: You are a good judge of everything.

MIRANDOLINA: Well, I don't often make a mistake.

BARON: But this time you have.

MIRANDOLINA: In what way, signore?

BARON: In thinking I deserve your special attention.

MIRANDOLINA [*sighing*]: Ah! Signore. . .

BARON [*perturbed*]: What's the matter? What are you sighing for?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, it's nothing, signore. It's only that I do try to please and nobody ever seems to be grateful.

BARON [*gently*]: I will not be ungrateful.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, please don't think I meant anything. It's only that when one does one's duty, one does hope. . .

BARON: No, no, believe me, I understand. I'm not such a clumsy lout as you may think. I won't give you cause to complain.

[*He pours some wine into the glass.*]

MIRANDOLINA: But . . . signore . . . I don't understand. . .

BARON [*raising his glass*]: Your very good health. [*He drinks.*]

MIRANDOLINA: Thank you. Thank you, signore. You are too good.

BARON: Mm! It is indeed an excellent wine, this.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, I adore Burgundy myself.

BARON [*offering her the wine*]: Would you care for some?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh! Thank you, signore, but I had better not.

BARON: Have you dined?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, signore.

BARON: You won't try a little wine?

MIRANDOLINA: Well, it's very kind of you.

BARON: Not at all, the pleasure is mine.

MIRANDOLINA: Then just a little. But I really don't deserve such kindness.

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Bring another glass.

MIRANDOLINA: No, no, if you will allow me, I will take this.

[*She picks up the Baron's glass.*]

BARON: But I've used that one!

MIRANDOLINA [*laughing*]: Ah, but by drinking from this I'll know what you really think of me!

[*The SERVANT puts another glass in front of the BARON.*]

BARON [*aside, as he pours himself some more wine*]: The little hussy!

MIRANDOLINA: Perhaps this wine might upset me if I don't eat something with it. May I have a piece of bread?

BARON: Of course. [*giving her some bread*] There you are.

[*MIRANDOLINA, holding the glass in one hand and the bread in the other, stands awkwardly, as if not knowing what to do with herself.*]

BARON: But how clumsy of me! Won't you sit down?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, but that would be too much, signore!

BARON: I insist! Besides we are alone. [*to the SERVANT*] Bring a chair.

SERVANT [*aside*]: He must be ill. I've never seen him like this before. [*He places a chair for MIRANDOLINA at the table beside the BARON.*]

MIRANDOLINA: Poor me, if the Count or the Marquis knew of this!

BARON: Why?

MIRANDOLINA: A hundred times they've tried to persuade me to eat or drink with them, but I wouldn't.

BARON: Never mind that. Make yourself comfortable.

MIRANDOLINA: I must obey you. [*She sits beside him and puts the wine and bread on the table.*]

BARON [*aside to the SERVANT*]: Don't you tell a soul about this!

SERVANT [*aside to the BARON*]: Never fear! [*to himself*] This is something new!

MIRANDOLINA [*raising her glass*]: To the Baron! May all his wishes come true. [*She drinks.*]

BARON: I thank you - most charming hostess.

MIRANDOLINA: And down with women!

BARON: What's that?

MIRANDOLINA: I know you can't stand the sight of women.

BARON: That's true. I never *was* able to. . . .

MIRANDOLINA: May you never change.

BARON: I . . . er . . . I wouldn't like you to . . . [*He glances at the SERVANT.*]

MIRANDOLINA: You wouldn't like me to what?

BARON: Listen. [*He leans across to her and speaks into her ear*] I wouldn't like you to make me feel differently.

MIRANDOLINA: I, signore? But how could I do that?

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Go and boil a couple of eggs. Bring them in when they're ready.

SERVANT: D'you want them soft- or hard-boiled?

BARON: Any way you like! Get out!

SERVANT [*aside*]: He's warming up all right. [*Exit!*]

BARON: Mirandolina, you are a very attractive young lady.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, signore, now you're making fun of me!

BARON: Listen. What I'm going to tell you is the truth, the complete truth. And it's something you should be very proud of.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, please do tell me!

BARON: You are the very first woman I have ever enjoyed talking to.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, I wouldn't say that's anything for me

to be especially proud of, signore. You see, signore, it takes all sorts to make a world, and when you meet somebody you've got something in common with, you seem to recognize them instinctively. It's a feeling, a sort of sympathy. D'you know, I myself've a feeling for you which I've never had for anybody else.

BARON: D'you want to rob me of my peace of mind?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, come, signore, you're a sensible man. Be sensible. Don't give in to weakness like others do. Indeed, if I thought you might, I wouldn't come here again. Though I must confess that I too . . . feel . . . something I've never felt before. But I'm not going to make a fool of myself over any man. And certainly not over a man who hates women and who maybe's just leading me on for a bit of fun. May I have a little more Burgundy, Illustrious Signor?

BARON: What? . . . Oh, yes, of course! [*He takes her glass and pours more wine into it.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*aside*]: He's ripe for picking.

BARON [*giving her the glass of wine*]: There you are.

MIRANDOLINA: Thank you. But aren't you having any yourself?

BARON: Yes, I'll have some. [*aside*] I'd best get drunk. One devil may chase out the other. [*He pours more wine into his own glass.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*coaxingly*]: Signor Baron?

BARON: What's the matter?

MIRANDOLINA: Touch glasses! [*She touches his glass with hers*] To good friendship!

BARON [*rather despairingly*]: To good friendship.

MIRANDOLINA: To all who are in love with each other . . . frankly and sincerely. Drink!

BARON: Your health. . . .

[*The MARQUIS enters.*]

MARQUIS: Here I am! Whose health are we drinking to?

BARON [*discomposed*]: What d'you want, Marquis?

MARQUIS: Excuse me, old fellow. But I did give you a shout but nobody answered.

MIRANDOLINA

MIRANDOLINA [*making to go*]: If you will allow me. . . .

BARON [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: No don't go! [*to the MARQUIS*] Look here! I don't walk into *your* room uninvited.

MARQUIS: Do forgive me. Between friends, you know. And I thought you were alone. Delighted you're getting acquainted with our charming hostess. What d'you say now, eh? A real pearl, isn't she?

MIRANDOLINA: I came here, signore, to wait upon the Baron. A little faintness came over me and he kindly gave me a glass of Burgundy to put me right.

MARQUIS [*to the BARON*]: Is that Burgundy?

BARON: It is.

MARQUIS: Real Burgundy?

BARON: Well I'm paying enough for it.

MARQUIS: Leave it to me. Let me try it and I'll soon tell you if it's the real thing or not.

BARON [*going to the door and calling*]: Ho, there!

[*The SERVANT enters with the eggs.*]

BARON: A small glass for the Marquis.

MARQUIS: Needn't be small. Burgundy's not a liqueur. You can't judge it properly unless you have enough of it.

SERVANT: Here are the eggs, signore. [*He puts them on the table.*]

BARON: That will be all, then.

MARQUIS: What have you got there?

BARON: Eggs.

MARQUIS: Take 'em away. Can't stand 'em.

[*The SERVANT puts the eggs on the sideboard.*]

MIRANDOLINA: Marquis, if the Baron will permit, won't you taste this little ragout made with my own hands?

MARQUIS: Rather! [*to the SERVANT*] Well? What about a chair?

[*The SERVANT places a chair for the Marquis at the table and places a wine glass for him.*]

MARQUIS: I'll need a fork.

ACT TWO

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Get him the lot.

[*The SERVANT lays cutlery in front of the MARQUIS.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*rising*]: I'm feeling much better now, Baron. I will go.

MARQUIS: Do me the pleasure of staying a little.

MIRANDOLINA: But, signore, I have my work to attend to. And then the Baron. . . .

MARQUIS [*to the BARON*]: D'you mind if she stays a little longer?

BARON: What do you want with her?

MARQUIS: I want you both to try a little Cyprus wine of mine. You won't find its equal anywhere. And I'd particularly like to hear Mirandolina's opinion on it.

BARON [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: Then you'd better stay. To please the Marquis.

MIRANDOLINA: The Signor Marquis must excuse me.

MARQUIS [*eating*]: You don't want to taste it?

MIRANDOLINA: Another time, your Excellency.

BARON: I said you'd better stay.

MIRANDOLINA [*to the BARON*]: Are you ordering me to?

BARON: I am asking you to.

MIRANDOLINA [*sitting again*]: I will do as you ask.

BARON [*aside*]: She really does want to please me!

MARQUIS [*eating*]: Excellent! What a superb dish! Most savoury ragout I've ever tasted.

BARON [*softly to MIRANDOLINA*]: The Marquis is jealous because you're sitting close to me.

MIRANDOLINA [*softly to the BARON*]: He doesn't mean a thing to me.

BARON [*as above*]: So you are a man-hater then?

MIRANDOLINA [*as above*]: Yes! Just like you're a woman-hater!

BARON [*as above*]: Is this how women are to have their revenge on me?

MIRANDOLINA [*as above*]: What do you mean, signore?

BARON [*as above*]: You artful little rogue! You know what I mean!

MARQUIS [*raising his glass of Burgundy*]: My friend, your very good health.

BARON: Well? What d'you think of it?

MARQUIS: With all respect, I think nothing of it. You shall try my Cyprus wine.

BARON: But where is it, this Cyprus wine?

MARQUIS: I have it here. I carry it with me. You'll enjoy this. This is something worth tasting. [*He takes a tiny bottle from his pocket.*]

MIRANDOLINA: From the look of that, Marquis, you're making sure we don't get drunk on your wine.

MARQUIS: On this? But this isn't to be drunk. It's to be tasted! Drop by drop! [*to the SERVANT*] Well? Where are the glasses?

[*He opens the bottle. The SERVANT brings some glasses.*]

MARQUIS: Eh, those are too big! Haven't you any smaller? [*He covers the bottle with his hand.*]

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Bring the liqueur glasses.

MIRANDOLINA: Couldn't we just have a smell of it?

MARQUIS [*smelling it*]: Beautiful! A most soothing fragrance!

[*The SERVANT puts three tiny glasses on the table. Very slowly and carefully the Marquis pours a little of his wine into each of the glasses. He hands one to the BARON, one to MIRANDOLINA and keeps one himself. He then carefully recorks the bottle.*]

MARQUIS [*taking a sip of his wine*]: Ah! Nectar! Ambrosia! Wine of the gods!

BARON [*softly to MIRANDOLINA*]: What is this stuff?

MIRANDOLINA [*softly to the BARON*]: Dregs from bottles.

MARQUIS [*to the BARON*]: Well? What d'you say?

BARON: Good. Very fine.

MARQUIS: Ah! [*to MIRANDOLINA*] Mirandolina! You like it?

MIRANDOLINA: I, signore? I can't say what I don't think. No, I don't like it. I think it's horrible and I'm not going to pretend I like it. It may be a useful thing to be able to

pretend and deceive. But the person who can deceive in one thing can deceive in another.

BARON [*aside*]: That sounds like one for me. Though I don't see why.

MARQUIS: Then you're no judge of this sort of wine, Mirandolina. I am sorry for you. You liked that handkerchief I gave you. You were able to appreciate that. But you know nothing about Cyprus wine. [*He goes on sipping from his glass.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*softly to the BARON*]: Such boasting!

BARON [*softly to MIRANDOLINA*]: Not like me.

MIRANDOLINA [*as above*]: You boast about your contempt for women.

BARON [*as above*]: And you about all the men who run after you.

MIRANDOLINA [*as above, coquettishly*]: Not all men.

BARON [*as above, with some feeling*]: Yes - all.

MARQUIS [*to the servants*]: You there! Three clean glasses. [*The servant brings three more.*]

MIRANDOLINA: No more for me.

MARQUIS: Don't worry. This isn't for you. [*He pours some Cyprus wine into the three glasses.*] Now, my man, with your master's permission, go to the Count of Albariorita and tell him from me - loudly so everyone can hear - that I'd like him to come and try a little of my Cyprus wine.

SERVANT: Certainly, signore. [*aside*] He'll not get drunk on that. [*Exit*]

BARON: Marquis, you're really too generous.

MARQUIS: I? You should ask Mirandolina about that.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, quite!

MARQUIS: Has the Baron seen the handkerchief?

MIRANDOLINA: No.

MARQUIS [*to the BARON*]: Get her to show it you. [*He puts his bottle of wine, of which he has used hardly any, back in his pocket.*]
The flavour of this wine will stay with me all evening.

MIRANDOLINA: Mind it doesn't go to your head, Marquis.

MARQUIS [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: Ah! If you only knew what does go to my head!

MIRANDOLINA: What?

MARQUIS: Those lovely eyes of yours!

MIRANDOLINA: Is that so?

MARQUIS: Baron, I'm in love with her. Completely. Irrevocably.

BARON: Then I'm sorry for you.

MARQUIS: But *you've* never known the meaning of love. Ah, if only you had, how you would sympathize with me!

BARON: Yes - I do sympathize with you.

MARQUIS: But you've no idea how wild with jealousy it makes me. Oh, I don't mind her being here with you, of course. I know your feelings in the matter. If I didn't I wouldn't let her near you for a hundred thousand crowns.

BARON [*aside*]: This fellow's beginning to annoy me.

[*The servant enters carrying a bottle on a tray.*]

SERVANT [*to the MARQUIS*]: The Count thanks your Excellency and sends you this bottle of Canary wine.

MARQUIS: What! He puts his dam' Canary wine on a par with my Cyprus wine! Let's see it! The fellow's mad! [*He takes the bottle, uncorks it and smells it.*] Pigwash! I can tell by the smell! [*He rises with the bottle and begins walking to the door.*]

BARON [*to the MARQUIS*]: Taste it first.

MARQUIS: Taste it? Taste this pigswill! It's a dam' insult to offer such stuff to anybody. This is the last straw. He's always trying to go one better than me. Trying to show me up. Trying to provoke me. Well, this time he's gone too far. Mirandolina, if you don't turn that Count out of this Inn, I'll . . . I'll . . . well, there'll be no telling what I won't do! That fellow's asking for it. I am I, and I'll not be insulted like this! [*He goes out taking the bottle with him.*]

BARON: That fellow's going crazy.

MIRANDOLINA: I don't know: he didn't forget to take the bottle with him.

BARON: He's mad, I tell you. And it's you've made him like that.

MIRANDOLINA: Now, really! Am I the sort to make men mad?

BARON [*feverishly*]: Yes, you are!

MIRANDOLINA [*rising*]: Signor Baron, with your permission . . .

BARON: Stay where you are!

MIRANDOLINA [*going*]: Excuse me. I make nobody go mad.

BARON [*rising but remaining near the table*]: Listen to me.

MIRANDOLINA [*going towards the door*]: Pardon me.

BARON [*commandingly*]: Stop, I tell you!

MIRANDOLINA [*turning, haughtily*]: What do you want with me?

BARON [*confused*]: Nothing . . . let us have another glass of Burgundy.

MIRANDOLINA: Well, hurry up, then. Be quick because I'm going.

BARON: Sit down.

MIRANDOLINA: Standing, standing!

BARON [*gently giving her the glass*]: Take it then.

MIRANDOLINA: I'll give you a toast before I go. A little verse my grandmother taught me.

Wine and Love are for you and me!

Wine in the mouth, but Love in the eyes.

I drink the wine: but with my eyes,

I look at you - as you look at me.

[*Exit*]

BARON: I *do* like that! Now come here and listen to me. . . . Why, the little devil, she's escaped! She's gone! And left me with a hundred devils to torment me.

SERVANT: Shall I put the fruit on the table?

BARON: The devil take you as well!

SERVANT: Yes, signore. [*Exit*]

BARON: 'I drink the wine: but with my eyes,

I look at you - as you look at me.'

What the devil is that supposed to mean? But what else can it mean? The little villain's out to get me! And she knows how to do it, the charming little rogue she is! If I stay here she'll be twisting me round her little finger. Leghorn! I must leave for Leghorn tomorrow! And never set eyes on

her again! And she'd better not dare come back in here. Damn all women. I swear I'll never set foot again in any place where there's a woman! But what about tonight? If I sleep in this house tonight who knows what mightn't happen? Mirandolina could easily finish me off. Ruined, that's what I'd be. [*He thinks*] Yes, I'll do it! I'll act like a man!

[*The SERVANT enters.*]

SERVANT: Signore!

BARON: Now what is it?

SERVANT: The Marquis is waiting in his room. He'd like to speak to you.

BARON: What's that imbecile after now? He's not getting any more money out of me, that's certain. Oh, let him wait. When he's fed up waiting, he'll give up. Go and find that waiter and tell him to bring my bill at once.

SERVANT [*about to go*]: Certainly.

BARON: Wait! And get the luggage ready for us to leave in two hours.

SERVANT: You're leaving?

BARON: Yes. Bring my sword and hat and don't let the Marquis see you.

SERVANT: But suppose he sees me getting the luggage?

BARON: Say anything. You understand me?

SERVANT: Yes, but I don't like leaving Mirandolina like this. [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: Neither do I. The very thought of leaving her fills me with a sadness I've never known before. But that's all the more reason why I must go. And the sooner the better. Women! This only shows how right I was! Even when they try to be helpful, all they do is cause trouble!

[*FABRIZIO enters.*]

FABRIZIO: Is it true, signore, you want your bill?

BARON: Yes. Have you brought it?

FABRIZIO: The mistress of the Inn is making it out now.

BARON: She makes out the bills?

FABRIZIO: Oh, yes, signore. She's always done that, even when her father was alive. She can do the accounts better than any clerk could.

BARON [*aside*]: What an astonishing woman she is!

FABRIZIO: But do you have to leave so suddenly?

BARON: Yes . . . urgent business matters, you understand.

FABRIZIO: You won't forget the waiter then, signore?

BARON: Bring me the bill and you'll find I know what to do.

FABRIZIO: You want it brought to you here?

BARON: Yes, in here! I'm not leaving my room for the time being.

FABRIZIO: Yes, you're wise. That old skinflint the Marquis is on the look-out for you. He's a fine one. Keeps trying to make love to the mistress. Lot of good that'll do him. Mirandolina's going to be my wife.

BARON [*savage*]: The bill!

FABRIZIO: At once, signore. [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: The whole dam' lot of them are crazy about Mirandolina! No wonder I began to fall for her myself. But I'll get away. I'll not become like the rest of them - fascinated by this strange power of hers.

[*MIRANDOLINA enters with the bill in her hand.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*sadly*]: Signore. . . .

BARON: What is it, Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA [*remaining by the door*]: Excuse me. . . .

BARON: Please do come in.

MIRANDOLINA [*sadly*]: You sent for your bill. I have brought it.

BARON: Give it to me.

MIRANDOLINA: There you are. [*She wipes her eyes with her apron as she gives it to him.*]

BARON: What's the matter? Are you crying?

MIRANDOLINA: It's nothing, signore. Some smoke must have got in my eyes.

BARON: Some . . . smoke in your eyes? Oh? . . . Well. . . . Yes, well, what does the bill come to? [*He looks at it.*] Twenty paoli? For four days only twenty paoli?

MIRANDOLINA: That is your bill.

BARON: But those two special dishes you gave me today? You haven't put those down?

MIRANDOLINA: Forgive me. What I give, I do not charge for. BARON: You've been giving me presents?

MIRANDOLINA: Please forgive me. And accept them as a token of. . . [*She covers her face as if to hide her tears.*]

BARON: But what's the matter?

MIRANDOLINA: It . . . it may be the smoke . . . or something wrong with my eyes.

BARON: I do hope it's not through cooking those two wonderful dishes for me.

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, if it were I would suffer it . . . gladly. . . [*She appears to be trying to prevent herself bursting into tears.*]

BARON [*aside*]: I must get away! [*aloud*] Here are two ducats. Get something with them to remember me by . . . and think of me sometimes . . . with pity. [*Without speaking, MIRANDOLINA collapses on to one of the chairs as if in a faint.*] Mirandolina! Oh, good heavens, she's fainted! Mirandolina! Can she really be in love with me? So quickly? But why not? Aren't I in love with her? Oh, darling Mirandolina! . . . What am I saying! I? Calling a woman 'darling'? But if she's fainted, and because of me . . . oh, how lovely you are! If only I'd something to bring you round. I've no women's things, no scents, no smelling salts. Ho, there! Is anybody there? Where is everybody? I'll go myself! Oh, my poor darling, how adorable you are! [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA [*sitting up*]: At last! I have him! I thought that would do it. When everything else fails, there's nothing like a good fainting fit. It always brings men to their knees. He's coming back. Here goes! [*She collapses as before.*]

BARON [*returning with a glass of water*]: Here I am! Here I am! She hasn't come to yet! Oh, how she must love me! Perhaps if I sprinkle a little water on her face. [*He throws water on her face and she begins to move.*] There, there, my darling, I am here. I will never leave you now.

[*The SERVANT enters carrying the sword and hat.*]

SERVANT [*to the BARON*]: Here are your sword and hat.

BARON [*to the SERVANT*]: Get out!

SERVANT: The luggage . . .

BARON: Go away, damn you!

SERVANT: Oh! . . . Mirandolina. . .

BARON: Get out or I'll break your neck! [*The SERVANT goes.*] She's still unconscious! Her dear little forehead is all moist and wet. Oh, Mirandolina, dear Mirandolina! Open your eyes! Speak to me!

[*The MARQUIS and the COUNT enter.*]

MARQUIS: Baron!

COUNT: Oh, I say!

BARON [*aside, frantically*]: Damn and blast them!

MARQUIS: Mirandolina, it is I!

MIRANDOLINA [*getting up*]: Oh, dear! Oh, dear me!

MARQUIS: There! I've brought her round.

COUNT: I congratulate you, Baron.

MARQUIS: Yes, dam' quick work - for somebody who can't stand women!

BARON: What the devil d'you mean?

COUNT: So you've fallen, too?

BARON: Go to hell, the lot of you!

[*He throws the glass at them. It breaks in pieces on the floor. He then rushes furiously out of the room.*]

COUNT: The Baron's gone mad! [*He rushes out after him.*]

MARQUIS: No! That was an insult! To me! I demand satisfaction! [*He also rushes out after them.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*alone*]: Victory at last! He's on fire, in flames, burning to red-hot cinders! Now all that's left to do, to finish him off, is to make my triumph public. Everyone shall see how I have upheld the honour of my sex and taught a lesson to all such presumptuous men! [*Exit*]

Act Three

[The same as Act One. On the table a pile of linen is waiting to be ironed.]

MIRANDOLINA [alone]: I must stop amusing myself for a moment and get some work done. I'd better iron this laundry and put it away. [She calls softly] Oh, Fabrizio!

FABRIZIO [entering]: Yes, signorina?

MIRANDOLINA: Be nice to me - and bring me the hot iron.

FABRIZIO [morosely, turning to go]: Yes, signorina.

MIRANDOLINA: You don't mind, do you?

FABRIZIO: Not at all, signorina. I eat your bread, so I must obey you.

MIRANDOLINA [as he is about to go]: No, wait. Listen to me. There is no 'must' between you and me. You are not obliged to obey me in anything. You see, Fabrizio, I know what you do for me, you do most willingly . . . and as for me . . . but no more of this at the moment.

FABRIZIO: As for me, yes! For you I would carry irons all day. But I see that it's all wasted on you.

MIRANDOLINA: How d'you mean - wasted? In what way am I ungrateful?

FABRIZIO: A man's no use to you if he's poor. The nobility are more to your liking.

MIRANDOLINA: You're mad! Why, if you knew what I know! Off with you and fetch me that iron.

FABRIZIO: I know what I've seen . . . with my own eyes. . . .

MIRANDOLINA: Will you get along and stop talking nonsense. Bring me the iron.

FABRIZIO: All right, I'm going. But I'll be going for good soon. [He goes towards the door.]

MIRANDOLINA [pretending to speak to herself but meaning to be heard]: With some men, the more you love them the worse it is for you.

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FABRIZIO [stopping and turning, and speaking tenderly]: What did you say?

MIRANDOLINA: Are you getting that iron or aren't you? FABRIZIO: Yes, yes, I'm getting it. [aside] I don't understand. One minute she's leading me on. And the next giving me the cold shoulder. I just don't understand. [Exit.]

MIRANDOLINA [alone]: Poor lad, he can't help doing what I ask. But it does amuse me - making men do what I want. This Baron, for instance. Yes, this dear enemy of women! Just what couldn't I make him do now, if I wanted to!

[The Baron's SERVANT enters.]

SERVANT: Signorina Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, what is it, friend?

SERVANT: My master's compliments and he's sent me to see how you are.

MIRANDOLINA: Tell him I am very well.

SERVANT: He says he thinks you should drink a little of this. It's some Melissa spirits. He's sure it will do you good.

[He gives her a small gold bottle.]

MIRANDOLINA: But - this bottle! It's made of gold!

SERVANT: That's right, signorina, real gold. I can vouch for that.

MIRANDOLINA: How is it he didn't give me some of this before? When I had that horrible fainting spell?

SERVANT: Oh, he didn't have that bottle then.

MIRANDOLINA: How does he come to have it now?

SERVANT: Between ourselves - I'll tell you. He's just sent me out to find a goldsmith. He bought that bottle from him. Paid twenty zecchini. Then he sent me to the chemist to buy the Melissa spirits.

[MIRANDOLINA breaks into uncontrollable laughter.]

SERVANT: Why are you laughing?

MIRANDOLINA: Because he sends me the remedy when I'm better.

SERVANT: It will do for another time.

MIRANDOLINA

MIRANDOLINA: I'll drink a little, to be on the safe side. [*She drinks and then offers him the bottle back again.*] There you are. Thank him for me.

SERVANT: But the bottle is yours.

MIRANDOLINA: How mine?

SERVANT: That's why he bought it. Just for you.

MIRANDOLINA: Just . . . for me?

SERVANT: Yes. Please don't let on I told you!

MIRANDOLINA: Take the bottle back and say I'm much obliged.

SERVANT: Oh, but . . .

MIRANDOLINA: Take it back, d'you hear? I don't want it.

SERVANT: You want to offend him, is that it?

MIRANDOLINA: Don't talk nonsense. Just do as I say. Take it back.

SERVANT: Well, this beats everything! All right, I'll take it. [*aside*] What a woman! To refuse twenty zecchini! I'll never come across another like her. [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA [*alone*]: So! He's roasted, basted and done to a turn! But not for what I can get out of him. Oh, no! All I want is to make him admit that women can have power over men, without wanting to get anything out of them.

[*FABRIZIO enters, carrying the iron.*]

FABRIZIO [*distantly*]: Here is the iron.

MIRANDOLINA: Is it nice and hot?

FABRIZIO: Yes, signorina. Flaming hot. Like *me!*

MIRANDOLINA: Now what's the matter with you?

FABRIZIO: This Illustrious Baron - that's what's the matter with me. He's been sending you messages and presents! His servant's just told me.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, *signore*, he has. He sent me a gold bottle. And I sent it back.

FABRIZIO: You sent it back?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes. Ask that servant of his, if you like.

FABRIZIO: Why did you send it back?

MIRANDOLINA: Because . . . Fabrizio . . . I can't say. . . . Look, can't we talk of something else?

ACT THREE

FABRIZIO: Mirandolina . . . please . . . have pity on me.

MIRANDOLINA: Go away! Let me do my ironing!

FABRIZIO: I'm not in your way.

MIRANDOLINA: Well, go and heat another iron . . . and then bring it here.

FABRIZIO: Very well. But you must believe that I . . .

MIRANDOLINA: If you say another word you'll drive me crazy!

FABRIZIO: All right - I'll keep silent. [*aside*] It's she who'll drive me crazy. Because I love her. [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA [*alone*]: That sorted itself out quite well. By refusing the Baron's gold bottle, I've pleased Fabrizio at any rate. [*She goes on ironing.*]

[*The Baron enters.*]

BARON [*aside*]: So, there she is! Oh, what the devil made me start looking for her!

MIRANDOLINA [*aside, as she sees him out of the corner of her eye and continues ironing*]: Here he is! Here he is!

BARON: Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Oh, there you are, Baron! I beg your pardon, I didn't see you.

BARON: How are you?

MIRANDOLINA [*going on ironing and not looking at him*]: Very well, thank you.

BARON: You have made me very unhappy.

MIRANDOLINA [*glancing up at him for a moment*]: How, *signore*?

BARON: By refusing a little bottle I sent you.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: What did you *think* I'd do?

BARON: Keep it for when you might need it.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: I'm not subject to fainting spells, thank heaven. In fact I've *never* experienced before what happened to me today.

BARON: Dear Mirandolina . . . I shouldn't like to think I was the cause of it.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Well, I'm afraid you were.

BARON [*deeply moved*]: Was I? Really?

MIRANDOLINA

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing away furiously*]: You made me drink that cursed Burgundy. And it upset me.

BARON [*almost speechless with mortification*]: Is that all you mean?

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Yes, that. And nothing else. I'll never set foot in your room again.

BARON [*lovingly*]: Ah, now I understand. You don't want to be seen in my room any more. So, that's all it is! You had me quite mystified. Yes, of course, now I understand. But come to me now, my darling, and you will find everything will please you.

MIRANDOLINA: This iron's getting cold. [*calling loudly*]
Fabrizio! If the other iron's hot, bring it here.

BARON: Come, be nice to me now. Take this bottle.

MIRANDOLINA [*scornfully, going on ironing*]: Signor Baron, I do

not accept presents.

BARON: You do from the Count.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: That's different. I have to from him so as not to offend him.

BARON: So you don't mind offending me?

MIRANDOLINA: What's it matter to you if a woman offends you? You can't stand the sight of them.

BARON: Ah, Mirandolina, that's no longer true.

MIRANDOLINA: Signor Baron, are you affected by the moon? BARON: Affected by the moon! How can you! No, this change in me is a miracle wrought by your charm and your beauty.

[MIRANDOLINA laughs loudly and goes on ironing.]

BARON: You laugh?

MIRANDOLINA: Shouldn't I? You say something funny and expect me not to laugh?

BARON: You little rascal! Being funny, was I? Come, take this bottle.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Thank you - no.

BARON: Take it or I'll lose my temper.

MIRANDOLINA [*calling loudly and emphatically*]: Fabrizio! The iron!

BARON [*angrily*]: Are you taking it or aren't you?

ACT THREE

MIRANDOLINA [*taking the bottle and throwing it scornfully into the linen basket*]: Temper! Temper!

BARON: How dare you do that!

MIRANDOLINA [*calling loudly as before*]: Fabrizio!

[FABRIZIO enters carrying the iron. He bristles jealously at the sight of the BARON.]

FABRIZIO: Here I am.

MIRANDOLINA [*taking the iron*]: Have you made it nice and hot?

FABRIZIO [*frigidly*]: Yes, signorina.

MIRANDOLINA [*tenderly, to FABRIZIO*]: What is the matter? You seem upset.

FABRIZIO: It's nothing, signorina. Nothing at all.

MIRANDOLINA [*as before*]: Aren't you feeling well?

FABRIZIO: Give me the other iron. If you want it heating.

MIRANDOLINA [*as before*]: I really don't think you look at all well.

BARON: Give him the iron and let him get out of here!

MIRANDOLINA [*to the BARON*]: I think a lot of him, you understand. In fact, I don't know what I'd do without him.

BARON [*aside, in a frenzy of fury*]: I can't stand much more of this!

MIRANDOLINA [*giving the iron to FABRIZIO*]: Take it, my dear, and heat it for me.

FABRIZIO [*tenderly*]: Ah! Signorina! I would do. . .

MIRANDOLINA [*ebasing him out*]: Hurry! Hurry!

FABRIZIO [*aside, as he goes*]: What sort of a life is this! Oh, I can't stand much more of this! [*Exit*]

BARON [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: Extraordinarily kind to your waiter, aren't you?

MIRANDOLINA: And just what d'you mean by that?

BARON: Obviously you're madly in love with him.

MIRANDOLINA [*frowning*]: I - in love with a waiter? Obviously you don't know me very well. When I want to fall in love, I shan't throw myself away so cheaply.

BARON: Ah, you are worthy of the love of a king!

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: The king of barons or the king of waiters?

BARON: I'm not joking, Mirandolina. Talk seriously!

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: All right, talk. I'm listening.

BARON: Can't you stop ironing a moment?

MIRANDOLINA: I'm sorry. It's important I have this linen ready for tomorrow.

BARON: That linen's more important to you than I am?

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Certainly.

BARON: You mean that?

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing*]: Of course. This linen's some use to me. You're not.

BARON: On the contrary, I could be of far more use to you.

MIRANDOLINA: You - who can't stand the sight of women!

BARON: Will you stop tormenting me. You've had your revenge. I respect you. I respect all women like you - if there are any more. I respect you, I love you. I beg you to have pity on me.

MIRANDOLINA [*ironing hastily she knocks a cuff on to the floor*]: Yes, signore, let us take all that for granted.

BARON [*picking up the cuff and giving it her*]: You must believe me. . . .

MIRANDOLINA: Please don't trouble yourself.

BARON: You deserve to be waited on hand and foot.

[MIRANDOLINA laughs loudly.]

BARON: You laugh?

MIRANDOLINA: Because you are being funny again.

BARON: Mirandolina, I can't suffer any more!

MIRANDOLINA: Are you ill?

BARON: Yes, I do feel faint.

MIRANDOLINA [*throwing him his bottle contemptuously*]: Take some of your Melissa spirits then.

BARON: Stop treating me like this! I love you. I swear it. [*He tries to take her hand and she burns his with the iron*] OW!

MIRANDOLINA: I'm sorry - I didn't do that on purpose.
BARON: Never mind. It's nothing. Nothing to what you've already done to me.

MIRANDOLINA: How, signore?

BARON: My heart! You have wounded my heart!

MIRANDOLINA [*laughing*]: Fabrizio!

BARON: Stop calling that fellow!

MIRANDOLINA: But I need the other iron.

BARON: Then wait and I'll call my servant.

MIRANDOLINA [*continuing to call*]: Fabrizio!

BARON: If that fellow comes in here again, I'll crack his skull for him!

MIRANDOLINA: This is going beyond a joke! Aren't my own servants allowed to work for me now?

BARON: Call another one then. I can't stand the sight of that fellow.

MIRANDOLINA [*moving away from the table with the iron in her hand*]: You're getting a little too close, Signor Baron.

BARON: Have pity on me! I don't know what I'm doing!

MIRANDOLINA: I'll go into the kitchen. Then you'll be all right.

BARON: Oh, my beloved, don't leave me!

MIRANDOLINA [*moving further away from him*]: This is getting better and better!

BARON [*following her*]: Have pity on me!

MIRANDOLINA [*retreating before him*]: So I'm not even allowed to call whom I choose?

BARON [*following her*]: All right, I admit it. I'm jealous of him.

MIRANDOLINA [*aside, still retreating*]: Now I've only to make him sit up and beg.

BARON [*following her*]: I've never been in love like this before.

MIRANDOLINA [*retreating*]: I've never been ordered about like this before.

BARON [*following her*]: But I wasn't ordering you - I was. . . . begging you.

MIRANDOLINA [*turning proudly*]: And what is it you're begging from me?

BARON: Love. . . . compassion. . . . pity.

MIRANDOLINA: This morning you couldn't bear the sight of a woman. Now you're begging for love and pity? Oh, no,

it's not possible. You can't be serious! I don't believe a word of it! [*Exit*]

BARON [*alone*]: Damnation on the moment I first looked at that woman! I've fallen into the trap and I'm done for!

[*The MARQUIS enters.*]

MARQUIS: Baron, you have insulted me!

BARON: I'm sorry, it was an accident.

MARQUIS: I must say I'm surprised at you.

BARON: After all, the glass didn't hit you.

MARQUIS: A drop of water has stained my coat.

BARON: I repeat - I'm sorry.

MARQUIS: It was a damned impertinence.

BARON: I didn't do it on purpose. For the third time - I'm sorry.

MARQUIS: I demand satisfaction.

BARON: If you won't accept my apologies, if you require satisfaction - I am ready. I am not afraid of you.

MARQUIS [*changing his tone*]: It's just that I'm a little worried the stain may not come out.

BARON [*disdainfully*]: When a gentleman has apologized, what more can he do?

MARQUIS: Well, if you didn't do it deliberately to annoy me, let us forget about it.

BARON: I repeat I'm quite prepared to give you satisfaction.

MARQUIS: No, no, let's forget all about it.

BARON [*exploding*]: You ignorant snob!

MARQUIS: I say, that's not playing the game, what? I've got over my annoyance so what've you to be annoyed about?

BARON: You've caught me in a bad mood.

MARQUIS: I sympathize. I know what your trouble is, all right.

BARON: You mind your own business.

MARQUIS: Yes, you've got it badly, haven't you, Signor woman-hater?

BARON: What the devil are you talking about?

MARQUIS: You're in love.

BARON: Go to hell!

MARQUIS: Why try to hide it?

BARON: Keep out of my way, d'you hear? Or, by heaven, you'll be sorry. [*Exit*]

MARQUIS [*alone*]: Yes, he's in love. Ashamed of it and doesn't want anyone to know. Or perhaps he doesn't want anyone to know because he's afraid of me and what I might do to him if I thought he was my rival. It's a nuisance about this stain. These women usually have things for removing stains. [*He searches in the basket and then on the table and sees the bottle.*] What a beautiful little bottle! Is it gold or just imitation? It'll be imitation. If it was real gold it wouldn't be lying about here. If it contained eau de cologne, that might take this stain out. [*He opens it, smells it and then tastes it.*] No, it's Melissa spirits. That might do. I'll try it. I know, I'll go and ask those foreign ladies who are staying here to help me get this stain out. [*He goes out carrying the bottle in his hand.*]

[*The Baron's SERVANT enters and begins searching in the basket, on the table, and then all round the room.*]

SERVANT: Where the devil can that bottle have got to? [*He continues to search*] Well, I can't see the thing. I'd better go and tell Mirandolina I can't find it. [*Exit*]

[*The MARQUIS comes back through another door.*]

MARQUIS: These foreign ladies certainly have a way with them. Still, they seemed very pleased when I let them keep that little bottle. Just as well it wasn't real gold. If the worst comes to the worst, I can always put the matter right. Yes, if Mirandolina wants her little bottle I can always pay her for it - when I can.

[*The SERVANT comes back through the other door and begins searching on the table again.*]

MARQUIS [*to the SERVANT*]: What are you looking for, my man?

SERVANT: A little bottle of Melissa spirits. The Signorina

Mirandolina wants it. She says she left it here but I can't find it.

MARQUIS: A little imitation gold bottle?

SERVANT: Oh, no, signore, it was real gold.

MARQUIS: Real gold?

SERVANT [*still searching*]: Of course it was real gold. Didn't I see it bought and paid for? Twenty zecchini it cost.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: Oh, good heavens! And I've given it away as a present to those foreign ladies. [*aloud*] But how did a gold bottle like that come to be left lying about?

SERVANT [*still searching*]: She says she forgot it. But I can't find it.

MARQUIS: Oh, it couldn't possibly be real gold.

SERVANT: It was, I tell you. Perhaps your Excellency has seen it?

MARQUIS: I? I've seen nothing.

SERVANT: Well, I'll just have to tell her it's not here. It's her loss. She should have put it in her pocket. [*Exit*]

MARQUIS [*alone*]: Oh, what a calamity! I've given away a gold bottle worth twenty zecchini. And all because I thought it was imitation gold. What on earth shall I do? If I try to get the bottle back, I'll make myself look ridiculous. If Mirandolina finds out I had it, my honour will be in question. I am a nobleman. I'll simply have to pay her for it. But I've no money.

[*The COUNT enters.*]

COUNT: Well, Marquis, what d'you think of the great news?

MARQUIS: What news?

COUNT: That woman-hater of a Baron is in love with Mirandolina.

MARQUIS: Yes, I know. But I'm keeping my eye on him. I'll see he gets nowhere there.

COUNT: But supposing Mirandolina encourages him?

MARQUIS: Impossible. She wouldn't do such a thing to me. She knows who I am. She knows all I've done for her.

COUNT: I've done more for her than you. But it's not counting much with her. She's definitely encouraging him, paying

him little attentions she's never paid us. But that's the way with women. The more you do for them, the less thanks you get. They run after those who despise them.

MARQUIS: If I thought that were true . . . but it can't be. . . .

COUNT: Why can't it?

MARQUIS: You're not comparing the Baron with me, are you?

COUNT: Well, you saw her yourself sitting at his table with him. Has she ever done that with us? He has to have the best linen. His meals have to be served first. Special dishes have to be made for him with her own hands. Oh, the servants have noticed it, all right. Fabrizio is raging with jealousy. And what about that fainting fit? Whether she put it on or not, wasn't that as plain a declaration of love as you could ask for?

MARQUIS: What! D'you mean she made that delicious ragout for him herself? And gave me rice soup and some tough old beef? You're right! It's an insult, that's what it is! An insult to me, of all people!

COUNT: And what about me? After all I've spent on her?

MARQUIS: And me! Present after present I've given her. I even gave her a glass of my precious Cyprus wine. The Baron hasn't given her a fraction of what we have.

COUNT: Well, of course, he has given her one present.

MARQUIS: What? What has he given her?

COUNT: A gold bottle - containing Melissa spirits.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: Oh, good heavens! [*aloud*] How d'you know that?

COUNT: His servant told me.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: Damn and blast! This will mean trouble with the Baron!

COUNT: I see now she doesn't know the meaning of gratitude. I want nothing more to do with her. I shall leave here immediately.

MARQUIS: Yes, you are quite right. You must go.

COUNT: And you - a nobleman such as you are - you should not stay. You must come with me.

MARQUIS: But . . . where could I go?

COUNT: I'll find somewhere. Let me think.

MARQUIS: Where?

COUNT: We'll go to the house of a friend of mine. It will cost us nothing there.

MARQUIS: All right. I can't refuse such a good friend as yourself.

COUNT: Let us go. Let us both be revenged upon this ungrateful woman.

MARQUIS: Yes, we'll go. [*aside*] But what about that bottle? I'm a gentleman not a thief.

COUNT: Do not hesitate about it, Marquis. Let us get away from here at once. Back me up and I'll see you don't suffer.

MARQUIS: Well . . . if that's how you feel . . . but in confidence, quite between ourselves . . . my bailiff is a little late sometimes sending me my remittance.

COUNT: And you owe something here?

MARQUIS: Yes - twelve zecchini.

COUNT: Twelve zecchini! You can't have paid anything for months!

MARQUIS: Well, that's how it is. . . . I owe her twelve zecchini.

I can't leave without paying. Could you possibly oblige me?

COUNT: Willingly. Here you are. [*He takes out his purse.*]

Twelve zecchini.

MARQUIS: Wait. Now I come to think of it - it's thirteen.

[*aside*] I'd better give the Baron back his zecchino.

COUNT: Twelve, thirteen, it's all the same to me. There you

are.

MARQUIS: I'll pay you back as soon as I can.

COUNT: Whenever you please. Money's nothing to me - and to be revenged on that woman I'd spend a thousand

crowns.

MARQUIS: Yes, I've never met such ingratitude. After all I've spent on her, to treat me like this!

COUNT: I'll ruin this Inn for her! I've already persuaded those two actresses to leave.

MARQUIS: What two actresses?

COUNT: Those two foreigners that were staying here.

MARQUIS: You mean they weren't - ladies?

COUNT: Good heavens, no!

MARQUIS [*aside*]: My bottle! [*alone*] Where are they lodging now?

COUNT: At an Inn near the theatre.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: I'll get that bottle back then. [*Exit*]

COUNT [*alone*]: That's got him out of here. Now for the Baron. He won't make a fool of me again. There's a way I can get him out of here as well. And I'll set about it right now. [*Exit*]

[MIRANDOLINA enters through another of the three doors.]

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: Oh, dear, this is terrible! What on earth's come over the Baron? The devil must have got into him. If he finds me I'm done for. I'd better lock this door. [*She locks the door she came in by.*] I'm almost sorry I started all this now. It amused me at first, making him run after me. The arrogance of the fellow to despise women like that! But I've taken on more than I bargained for. The way he's going on, my life won't be safe soon. There's nobody here to defend me. Except Fabrizio. Yes, that's what I'll do. I'll tell Fabrizio I'll marry him. But I've promised and promised that so often he's giving up believing me. . . . But it *would* be the best way out of this for me to marry Fabrizio. Then I'd have somebody to protect me who wouldn't be ordering me about all the time.

[*The Baron is heard hammering at the door she has just locked.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: What a row! Whoever can it be? [*She goes closer to the door.*]

BARON [*calling, outside*]: Mirandolina!

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: Talk of the devil! It's him!

BARON [*as above*]: Mirandolina! Open the door!

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: Open the door? I'm not such a fool! [*alone*] What do you want, signore?

BARON: Let me in!

MIRANDOLINA: Go to your room and wait for me. I'll come in a moment.

BARON [*as above*]: Why don't you want to let me in?

MIRANDOLINA: Some guests are arriving. Please go away. I'll be with you directly.

BARON [*going*]: All right. But if you don't come, it'll be the worse for you!

MIRANDOLINA [*to herself*]: Oh, dear, this is getting worse and worse! I'll have to do something to put matters right. Has he really gone? [*She looks through the keyhole.*] Yes, he's gone, all right. But he won't get me coming to his room. [*She goes to one of the other doors and calls*] Fabrizio! [*to herself*] Now what'll I do if Fabrizio decides to have his own back on me and won't . . . oh, there's no danger of that, if I really put myself out to win him round. [*She goes to the third door and calls*] Oh, Fabrizio?

[FABRIZIO enters.]

FABRIZIO: Were you calling me?

MIRANDOLINA: Come here! I've something to tell you!

FABRIZIO: I am here.

MIRANDOLINA: What d'you think of this! The Baron has suddenly decided he's madly in love with me!

FABRIZIO: I know all about that.

MIRANDOLINA: You do? You know? And yet I hadn't noticed a thing myself!

FABRIZIO: You poor innocent child! You hadn't noticed? Couldn't you see the way he was looking at you when you were doing your ironing? Couldn't you see how jealous he was of me?

MIRANDOLINA: I'm afraid I *am* a little unsuspecting. But the things he's just been saying to me, Fabrizio! Well, really! They made me blush!

FABRIZIO: It's time you listened to me. This sort of thing is bound to happen to a young woman all on her own, without a father or mother or anyone. It wouldn't happen to you if you were married.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, I think you're right. As a matter of fact, I had been thinking the same thing.

FABRIZIO: Remember what your father said.

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, I am remembering. I am indeed.

[*The BARON is heard banging at the same door again.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*to FABRIZIO*]: There! Listen!

FABRIZIO [*loudly, going towards the door*]: Who is it?

BARON [*outside*]: Open this door!

MIRANDOLINA [*to FABRIZIO*]: It's him. It's the Baron!

FABRIZIO [*going to the door and calling*]: What d'you want?

MIRANDOLINA: Wait till I go.

FABRIZIO [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: What are you frightened of?

MIRANDOLINA: Dear Fabrizio, I don't know . . . I . . . I . . .

I'm afraid he'll force me against my will.

FABRIZIO: All right, leave this to me.

[MIRANDOLINA goes out through one of the other doors.]

BARON [*outside*]: Open this door! D'you hear me?

FABRIZIO: What d'you want, signore? What's all this shouting for? This is no way to behave in a respectable Inn.

BARON: Open this door! [*He is heard trying to force it.*]

FABRIZIO [*to himself*]: The devil take him! This looks like real trouble. [*He goes to one of the other doors and calls.*]

Ho, there! Is there anyone about?

[*The MARQUIS and the COUNT enter by the middle door.*]

COUNT [*as he enters*]: What's the matter?

MARQUIS [*following him*]: What's all the noise?

FABRIZIO [*softly, so that the BARON may not hear*]: Signore, it's the Baron! He's trying to force open that door.

BARON [*outside*]: Open the door! Or I'll break it down!

MARQUIS: He's gone mad! [*to the COUNT*] Let's get out of this!

COUNT [*to FABRIZIO*]: Open the door. I've a few words to say to that gentleman.

FABRIZIO: Yes, but supposing . . .

COUNT: That's all right. We are here.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: If there's any trouble, I'm off.

[FABRIZIO opens the door and the BARON rushes in.]

BARON: Where is she?

FABRIZIO: Who are you looking for, signore?

BARON: Where's Mirandolina?

FABRIZIO: I don't know.

MARQUIS [*aside*]: That's all right: it's not me he's after.

BARON: The little villain! Wait till I find her! [*He strides*

across the room and sees the COUNT and the MARQUIS.]

COUNT [*to the BARON*]: What's the matter with you?

MARQUIS: We are your friends, Baron.

BARON [*aside*]: The devil! These two mustn't know!

FABRIZIO: What do you want with my mistress, signore?

BARON: That's no business of yours. When I give orders I

expect them to be obeyed. That's what I pay for. And by

heavens I'll see she learns that.

FABRIZIO: Illustrious signore, what you pay for is to be

served in legitimate and honest ways, and that doesn't

include expecting that an honourable woman should. . . .

BARON: What are you talking about? What d'you know

about it? It's nothing to do with you! I know what I

ordered that woman to do and. . . .

FABRIZIO: You ordered her to come to your room.

BARON: You get out of here or I'll break your neck!

FABRIZIO: Let's see you try.

MARQUIS [*to FABRIZIO*]: Quiet!

COUNT [*to FABRIZIO*]: Go away!

FABRIZIO [*angrily*]: But, gentlemen, I tell you he. . . .

BARON [*to FABRIZIO*]: Get out!

MARQUIS: Yes, go on, get out!

COUNT: Out with you, d'you hear?

[*All three of them advance on him to chase him out.*]

FABRIZIO [*aside, as he runs out*]: That suits me all right! [*Exit*]

BARON [*aside, to himself*]: The little devil. Making me wait in

my room!

MARQUIS [*aside, to the COUNT*]: What the devil's the matter

with him?

COUNT [*aside, to the MARQUIS*]: Can't you see? He's in love

with Mirandolina.

BARON [*aside, to himself*]: Has she got this Fabrizio on a string

as well? Perhaps talking to him about marriage?

COUNT [*aside, to himself*]: Now for my revenge. [*Aloud, to the*

BARON] Signor Baron, you should not laugh at the weak-

nesses of others, when you've such a fragile heart yourself.

BARON: What d'you mean by that?

COUNT: I know why you're so angry.

BARON [*to the MARQUIS*]: What's he talking about?

MARQUIS: My dear friend, I know nothing about it.

COUNT: I'm talking about you. Pretending you couldn't

stand the sight of women! And then trying to steal Miran-

dolina from me!

BARON [*turning angrily to the MARQUIS*]: Is it me he's talking

about?

MARQUIS: I'm not saying anything!

COUNT: Never mind him. Look at me and deny it if you can.

Or is it you're ashamed of behaving in such a way?

BARON: All I'm ashamed of is standing here and not telling

you to your face you're a liar!

COUNT: A liar am I?

MARQUIS [*aside*]: This is getting worse!

BARON: What grounds have you for saying such a thing? [*to*

the MARQUIS] The Count doesn't know what he's talking

about!

MARQUIS: I don't want to be mixed up in this.

COUNT [*to the BARON*]: A liar am I? It's you who are the liar!

MARQUIS: I'm going.

[*He tries to go but the BARON holds him back forcibly.*]

BARON: Oh, no you're not.

COUNT: And I demand satisfaction.

BARON: With pleasure! [*to the MARQUIS*] Give me your

sword!

MARQUIS: Calm yourselves, both of you. My dear Count,

what does it matter to you if the Baron is in love with

Mirandolina?

BARON: I? In love with her? It's a lie! Whoever says that's a

liar!

MARQUIS: A liar? Me? No, no, it's not me who says that!

BARON: Who does, then?

COUNT: I say it. And I'll say it again. I'm not afraid of you.

BARON [*to the MARQUIS*]: Give me your sword!

MARQUIS: No.

BARON: Are you looking for trouble as well?

MARQUIS: I don't want trouble with anyone.

COUNT [*to the BARON*]: What's more, you're no gentleman!

BARON: By heaven, this is too much! [*He snatches the sword and scabbard from the MARQUIS.*]

MARQUIS [*to the BARON*]: How dare you!

BARON [*to the MARQUIS*]: And I'll give you satisfaction as well if you want it.

MARQUIS: There's no need to lose your temper! [*aside, vexatiously*] This is all most unpleasant!

COUNT [*drawing his sword and putting himself on guard*]: I demand satisfaction.

BARON [*trying unsuccessfully to pull the Marquis's sword out of its scabbard*]: I'll give it you!

MARQUIS: You don't know that sword. . . .

BARON [*struggling to force it out*]: Confound the damn thing!

MARQUIS: Baron, you'll never do it. . . .

COUNT: I'll not wait much longer!

BARON: There! [*He tugs out the sword and finds it has only half a blade.*] What the devil's this?

MARQUIS: You've broken my sword!

BARON: Where's the rest of it? [*He peers into the scabbard.*] There's nothing there!

MARQUIS: Yes, of course. . . . I remember now. . . . I broke it in my last duel.

BARON [*to the COUNT*]: Let me get a sword.

COUNT: By heavens, I'll see you don't get out of this!

BARON: All right! I'll face you with this! You're only worth half a sword!

MARQUIS: It's the finest Spanish steel!

COUNT: Enough of your boasting, you braggart!

BARON [*advancing on the COUNT*]: Yes, this bit of a blade's enough for you!

COUNT [*putting himself on the defensive*]: At you, then!

[MIRANDOLINA and FABRIZIO enter.]

FABRIZIO: Put up your swords, gentlemen!

MIRANDOLINA: Stop this nonsense at once!

BARON [*at the sight of MIRANDOLINA*]: Damn her!

MIRANDOLINA: Fighting with swords in my Inn!

MARQUIS: It's all your own fault.

MIRANDOLINA: My fault! How?

COUNT: This Signor Baron here. He's fallen in love with you.

BARON: That's not true! You're a liar!

MIRANDOLINA: The Baron in love with me? Oh, no, Count, you're mistaken. You're quite wrong, believe me.

COUNT: Oh, naturally, you can't admit to the fact. . . .

MARQUIS: But we know, we've seen. . . .

BARON [*advancing angrily on the MARQUIS*]: Who knows what? Who's seen what?

MARQUIS [*retreating*]: I mean. . . . What is, we know. . . . But what isn't, we've not seen!

MIRANDOLINA: The Baron has denied he is in love with me. He denies it to my face. By doing so, he wants to shame me, to show me how strong he is and how weak I am. Let me admit the truth. If he had fallen in love with me I should feel I had won a great victory. But how could one ever expect such a man as he to fall in love: a man who cannot bear the sight of women, who despises them, who thinks they are the lowest creatures in the world? Gentlemen, I'm a simple woman. I admire frankness and I detest insincerity. So I must be honest with you. Yes, I did try to make the Baron fall in love with me. But I failed. [*to the BARON*] That is true, isn't it, signore? I tried and tried, but I failed completely.

BARON [*aside*]: What the devil am I to say to that!

COUNT [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: You see! Now I've got him!

MARQUIS [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: He hasn't the courage to contradict you!

BARON [*angrily, to the MARQUIS*]: You don't know what you're talking about!

MARQUIS [*smoothly, to the BARON*]: Yes, that's all you can say to me, isn't it?

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, no, the Baron's not in love! He knows women's wiles. He can see through them all right. He's not one to be taken in by women's tears. Why, even when a woman faints, he only laughs.

BARON: Then, are the tears of *all* women . . . false? A woman who faints . . . is she always a liar?

MIRANDOLINA: What? Didn't you know that? Or are you pretending you didn't?

BARON: By all the powers in heaven! Such deceit as that would deserve a knife through the heart!

MIRANDOLINA: Come, Signor Baron, do not be angry simply because these gentlemen thought you were really in love with me.

COUNT: He is! Look at him! He can't hide it!

MARQUIS: Yes, you've only to look at his eyes.

BARON [*seriously, to the MARQUIS*]: No, I'm not!

MARQUIS: He always picks on *me*!

MIRANDOLINA: No, signore, he is not in love. I say it again. And to show you I mean it I'm ready to prove it to you.

BARON [*aside*]: I can't stand any more of this. [*to the COUNT*] Count, another time be prepared to find me provided with a sword.

[*He throws the half sword of the MARQUIS on to the ground.*]

MARQUIS [*picking it up*]: Take care! That hilt is valuable!

MIRANDOLINA: Before you go, Signor Baron, think of your reputation. These gentlemen believe you are in love. You must prove they are wrong.

BARON: There is no need. . . .

MIRANDOLINA: Oh, yes, signore, there is! And it won't take you a moment!

BARON [*aside*]: What's she up to now?

MIRANDOLINA: Signore, the surest sign of love is jealousy. If you don't feel jealous, you are not in love. [*to the others*] If the Baron was in love with me, he wouldn't be able to bear the thought that I was to belong to another. But now you'll see him accept that, and so you'll . . .

BARON: Who are you going to belong to?

MIRANDOLINA: To the husband my father chose for me.

FABRIZIO [*to MIRANDOLINA*]: You . . . you don't mean me?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, dear Fabrizio. In the presence of these gentlemen I give you my hand in marriage.

BARON [*to himself, in a frenzy*]: That fellow? I'll never get over this!

COUNT [*aside*]: She can't be in love with the Baron then! [*to MIRANDOLINA*] Yes, marry him, and I promise you three hundred crowns.

MARQUIS: Yes, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Marry him at once and I'll give you twelve crowns this very instant.

MIRANDOLINA: Thank you, signore. But I have no need of a dowry. I'm only a poor girl, without any of the graces and charm that would make me worthy of men of quality. But Fabrizio loves me and so here and now in your presence I take him as my husband.

BARON: All right, damn you, marry whom you please. You tricked me, so enjoy your triumph. You would like to see me grovelling at your feet, wouldn't you? You wretched woman, a dagger is what you deserve. And your heart cut out and shown as a warning to all women like you. Let me get out of your sight. I scorn and curse your female tricks, your tears, your lies. One thing you have taught me, to my bitter cost. It's not enough to despise women. No! One should flee from the very sight of them. As I do now. From you! [*Exit*]

COUNT: And he was just saying he wasn't in love!

MARQUIS: If he tells me another lie, I shall challenge him to a duel!

MIRANDOLINA: No more, please, gentlemen. He has gone, and if he doesn't come back I shall consider myself very fortunate to have got out of this so lightly. Poor man, I succeeded only too well in making him fall in love with me. I see now I was playing with fire. And I don't want it to happen again. Fabrizio! Come, my dear. Give me your hand. FABRIZIO: My hand? Not so fast, signorina. You amuse

yourself like this, making men fall in love with you, and think I want to marry you?

MIRANDOLINA: Now, don't you start acting crazy! It was all a joke! A game! A bit of fun! Oh, it was silly of me, I know, but it will be different when I am married.

FABRIZIO: How will it be different?

[*The Baron's servant enters.*]

SERVANT: Signorina, before we leave, I would like to say good-bye to you.

MIRANDOLINA: You are going then?

SERVANT: Yes. My master is having the horses put to the carriage. He is waiting for me to bring the luggage. We are going to Leghorn.

MIRANDOLINA: I am sorry if things haven't been. . . .

SERVANT [*much affected*]: I . . . I must not stay. Thank you. Thank you. Good-bye. [*Exit*]

MIRANDOLINA: Thank heaven he's gone. I am truly sorry for what has happened. Never again will I do such a thing.

COUNT: Mirandolina, whether you marry or whether you remain single, my feelings for you will never change.

MARQUIS: You may count always upon my protection.

MIRANDOLINA: Signori, now that I am marrying I shall not need your attentions, nor your presents, nor your protection. Until now I've been amusing myself. I have acted foolishly. I have hurt others and have been in danger of being hurt myself. That, signori, is now all ended. This is my husband.

FABRIZIO: Not quite so fast, signorina.

MIRANDOLINA: Now you're not making difficulties, are you? What d'you mean? There's nothing to prevent us, is there? Come, give me your hand.

FABRIZIO: I think we should first arrange the contract.

MIRANDOLINA: What contract? This is our contract - you give me your hand,* or you get back to where you came from.

* See footnote on p. 61.

FABRIZIO: If I do give you my hand - what then?

MIRANDOLINA: What then? Then, my dear, I am yours and yours alone. Do not doubt that. I shall love you always. You alone will be my protection, my consolation, my only love.

FABRIZIO: My dear, I do not ask for more.

[*He gives her his hand.*]

MIRANDOLINA [*aside*]: Now that's settled.

COUNT: Mirandolina, you are the most remarkable and extraordinary woman. There is nothing you cannot do.

MARQUIS: Yes, you're absolutely charming - quite out of the ordinary, my dear.

MIRANDOLINA: Your kindness, signori, encourages me to ask one last favour from you.

FABRIZIO [*aside*]: Now what is it she's after?

COUNT: You have but to ask.

MARQUIS: Speak.

MIRANDOLINA: I beg you to do me this favour. Find yourself another Inn.

FABRIZIO [*aside*]: She really does love me!

COUNT: I understand. Yes, you are right, Mirandolina. I shall go. But wherever I may be, you will always have my admiration and respect.

MARQUIS: Tell me - did you happen to lose a little gold bottle?

MIRANDOLINA: Yes, signore.

MARQUIS: Here it is. I found it and I restore it to you. To please you, I also shall leave. But you may always, whatever the circumstances, count upon my protection.

MIRANDOLINA: Your kind words, signori, will always mean very much to me - within certain limits. For in changing my state to that of a married woman, I shall learn to change my ways. [*She turns to face the audience*] And you also may learn from what you have seen. Whenever you feel yourselves falling in love, and wonder whether you should yield or not, think of the infinite tricks of women - and remember Mirandolina!