

FIGARO'S MARRIAGE

OR

One Mad Day |
A COMEDY

BY

BEAUMARCHAIS

English Version by Jacques Barzun

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CHARACTERS AND COSTUMING

COUNT ALMAVIVA (GOVERNOR OF ANDALUSIA) must be played with nobility of mien, but also with lightness and ease. The corruption of his heart must not diminish the perfect good form of his manners. In keeping with the morals of those days, the great regarded the conquest of women as a frolic. This role is an uncomfortable one in that its grandeur is invariably brought down and sacrificed to the other characters. But in the hands of a good actor, the role can bring out all the others and insure the success of the piece.

In the first and second acts the Count wears a hunting costume in the old Spanish style with half-length boots. In the remaining acts he wears a more gorgeous version of the same costume.

COUNTESS ALMAVIVA, who is moved by two opposite feelings, must show only a restrained tenderness and a moderate anger. Nothing must lower in the spectator's eyes her virtuous and lovable character. This role is one of the most difficult in the play.

The Countess's costume in the first, second, third, and fourth acts consists of a comfortable housecoat of straight and simple lines. She wears no ornament on her head. She is supposed to be indisposed and keeping to her room. In the fifth act she wears Suzanne's clothes and the high headdress that goes with them.

FIGARO (VALET TO THE COUNT AND STEWARD OF THE CASTLE). The actor who plays this role cannot be too strongly urged to study and make prevail at all times the true spirit of the character. If the actor finds in the part nothing but argumentativeness spiced with gaiety and wit; or even worse, if he allows himself any burlesquing, he will debase a role with which the greatest comedian can do himself honor by seizing upon its

many nuances and sustaining the highest possibilities of its conception.

Figaro's clothes are the same as in *The Barber of Seville*, that is, the suit of a Spanish major-domo. On his hair he wears a net; his hat is white and has a colored ribbon around the crown. A silk scarf is loosely tied around his neck. His vest and breeches are of satin with buttons and buttonholes finished in silver. His silk sash is very broad, his garters tied with cord and tassels which hang down on the leg. His coat must be of a color contrasting with the vest, but the lapels match the latter. White stockings and gray shoes.

SUZANNE (CHIEF CHAMBERMAID TO THE COUNTESS). A clever girl, full of wit and laughter, but displaying nothing of the impudent frivolity of our corruptive chambermaids. In her role, though it is nearly the longest in the play, there is not a word that is not inspired by goodness and devotion to her duty. The only trickery she allows herself is in behalf of her mistress, who relies on Suzanne's attachment and who has herself none but honorable thoughts.

Suzanne's costume in the first four acts is a tight bodice with flounced skirt, elegant though modeled on the peasant style. Her hat is a high toque (later called in France *à la Suzanne*). In the festivities of Act IV, the Count places on her head a white toque adorned with a long veil, tall feathers, and ribbons. In Act V she wears the Countess's housecoat and nothing on her head.

MARCELINE (HOUSEKEEPER OF THE CASTLE) is an intelligent woman with lively instincts whose experiences and mistakes have amended her character. If the actress who plays the role can rise with a certain judicious pride to the high morality that follows the recognition scene in Act III, it will add greatly to the interest of the play.

Her costume is that of the Spanish duenna, modest in color, a black bonnet on the head.

ANTONIO (A GARDENER, UNCLE OF SUZANNE AND FATHER OF FANCHETTE) must display only a half-tipsy condition, which gradually wears off, so that by Act V it is almost unnoticeable.

His clothes are those of a Spanish peasant; the sleeves hang down behind; a hat and white shoes.

FANCHETTE (THE DAUGHTER OF ANTONIO) is a girl of twelve and very naïve. Her costume has a tight-fitting bodice, peasant style, brown with silver buttons. The skirt is of contrasting color. She wears a black toque with feathers. The other girls in the wedding party are dressed like her.

CHERUBINO (CHIEF PAGE TO THE COUNT). This role cannot be properly played except by a young and very pretty woman. There is no young man on our stage who is sufficiently educated to feel the subtleties of the part. Excessively shy before the Countess, he is elsewhere a charmingly naughty boy. A vague restless desire is at the root of his character. He is rushing headlong through adolescence, but aimlessly and without worldly knowledge; he is the plaything of each passing event. In short, he is probably what every mother would like her son to be, even when she knows she will suffer for it.

In the first and second acts, Cherubino's costume is the rich court dress of a Spanish page, white trimmed with silver lace. He wears a light blue cloak off the shoulder and a hat with large plumes. In Act IV, he wears the bodice, skirt, and toque of the peasant girls; in Act V, an officer's uniform, a sword, and a cockade.

BARTHOLO (A DOCTOR FROM SEVILLE). His character and costume are the same as in *The Barber of Seville*, that is, a short black gown, buttoned up to the neck, and a large wig. The collar and cuffs are turned back and the belt is black. Outdoors he wears a long scarlet coat. In the present play, his role is secondary.

BASIL (THE COUNTESS'S MUSIC MASTER). Also secondary, Basil's character and costume are the same as in *The Barber*, which is to say: a black hat with hanging brim, a gown like a cassock, and a long coat without turned-up collar or cuffs.

DON GUZMAN BRIDLEGOOSE (ASSOCIATE JUSTICE OF THE DISTRICT). He must have the open and easy self-assurance of an

animal that has overcome its shyness. His stammer is only an additional charm, scarcely noticeable though it is. The performer would make a grave mistake to stress the ludicrous in this part, for the principle of it is the natural contrast between the solemnity of his office and the absurdity of his person. Therefore the less the actor burlesques the man, the more truly will the character appear and the actor's talent shine.

The costume is the robe of a Spanish judge, but less full than that of our state's attorneys—it is almost a cassock. He wears a great wig and a neckband Spanish style, and he carries a long white wand.

DOUBLEFIST (CLERK AND SECRETARY TO BRIDLEGOOSE). He is dressed like the justice, but carries a shorter wand.

THE BEADLE, OR ALGUAZIL, wears a coat and carries at his side a sword with a leather guard, but without a leather belt. Not boots but shoes, which are black. A white curly wig and a short white wand.

SUNSTRUCK (A YOUNG SHEPHERD) wears peasant clothes, sleeves hanging down, bright colored coat, white hat.

A YOUNG SHEPHERDESS—dressed like Fanchette.

PETER (THE COUNT'S POSTILION). Short belted coat over a vest, a courier's boots, hat and whip, a net over his hair.

WALK-ON PARTS (VALETS AND PEASANTS). Some in judge's costume, others dressed as peasants, the rest in livery.

note
more like
naturalism
than
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actor's
style
|
subtlety
contrast

ACT I

The scene is a half-furnished room. An invalid chair is in the middle. FIGARO is measuring the floor with a yardstick. SUZANNE, in front of a mirror, is fixing in her hair the sprig of orange blossoms commonly called "the bride's bonnet."

FIGARO. Nineteen feet by twenty-six.

SUZANNE. Look, Figaro—my bonnet. Do you like it better now?

FIGARO, *taking both her hands in his*. Infinitely better, my sweet. My, what that bunch of flowers—so pretty, so virginal, so suited to the head of a lovely girl—does to a lover on the morning of his wedding!

SUZANNE, *leaving*. What are you measuring there, my lad?

FIGARO. I am finding out, dear Suzy, whether the beautiful big bed that his lordship is giving us will fit into this room.

SUZANNE. *This* room?

FIGARO. He's letting us have it.

SUZANNE. But I don't want it.

FIGARO. Why not?

SUZANNE. I don't want it.

FIGARO. But tell me why.

SUZANNE. I don't like it.

FIGARO. You might give a reason.

SUZANNE. And supposing I don't?

FIGARO. Women! As soon as they have us tied down—

SUZANNE. To give a reason would imply that I might be unreasonable. Are you with me or against me?

FIGARO. You are turning down the most convenient room in the castle. It connects with both suites. At night, if my lady is unwell and wants you, she rings—and crack! there you are

in two hops. Is it something that my lord requires? A tinkle from his side, and zing! I am at the ready in three strides.

SUZANNE. Right enough! But when he's tinkled in the morning and given you a good long errand, zing! in three strides he is at my door, and crack! in two hops he—

FIGARO. What do you mean by those words?

SUZANNE. You'd better listen to me carefully.

FIGARO. What the devil is going on?

SUZANNE. What is going on is that his lordship Count Almaviva is tired of pursuing the beauties of the neighborhood and is heading for home—not to *his* wife, you understand, but to yours. *She* is the one he has his eye on, and he hopes this apartment will favor his plans. And that is what the faithful Basil, the trusted agent of the Count's pleasures, and my noble singing master as well, tells me every day during my lesson.

FIGARO. Basil, my boy, if ever the application of green birch to an ailing back has helped to correct curvature of the spine, I will—

SUZANNE. So in your innocence you thought that this dowry the Count is giving me was for your beaux yeux and your high merit?

FIGARO. I've done enough to hope it was.

SUZANNE. How stupid bright people are!

FIGARO. So they say.

SUZANNE. But *they* won't believe it!

FIGARO. *They* are wrong.

SUZANNE. Get it into your head that the dowry is to get from me, privately, a certain privilege which formerly was the right of the lord of the manor—you know what a grievous right it was.*

FIGARO. I know it so well that if the Count had not abolished its shameful exercise when he himself was married, I should never have planned to marry you on his lands.

* This supposed right to enjoy the bride on the wedding night of any vassal is without foundation in law or history, but was widely believed by the anti-medieval writers.

SUZANNE. He abolished it right enough, but he has had second thoughts. And he's thinking your fiancée is the one to restore it to him.

FIGARO, *rubbing his forehead*. My head grows mushy with surprise and my sprouting forehead—*

SUZANNE. Please don't rub it.

FIGARO. What's the harm?

SUZANNE. If you brought on a little pimple, superstitious people might—

FIGARO. You're laughing at me, you slut. Now if I could think of some way to catch out this professional deceiver, turn the tables on him and pocket his money—

SUZANNE. Plotting and pocketing—you're in your element. >

FIGARO. It certainly isn't shame that holds me back.

SUZANNE. Fear, then?

FIGARO. It's no great feat to start on a dangerous undertaking; the thing is to succeed and avoid trouble. Any knavish fool can go into a man's house at night, enjoy his wife, and get a beating for his pains—nothing is easier. But—

A bell rings.

SUZANNE. My lady is awake. She wanted me to be sure and be the first to talk to her this morning about the wedding.

FIGARO. Some more goings on?

SUZANNE. The almanac says it brings good luck to forsaken wives. Good-by, Fi-fi-garo darling; think about ways and means.

FIGARO. To prime my brains give a little kiss.

SUZANNE. To a lover, today? No, sir! What would my husband say tomorrow?

FIGARO *kisses her*.

SUZANNE. Now, now!

FIGARO. You don't know how much I love you.

SUZANNE, *adjusting her dress*. When will you learn not to bore me with it from morning till night?

* The play contains several allusions to the horns of the cuckold, expressed by references to his forehead.

FIGARO, *as if telling a secret*. Why, when I can prove it to you from night till morning.

The bell rings again.

SUZANNE, *blowing him a kiss from the door*. There's your kiss, sir, I have nothing else of yours to return.

FIGARO, *running after her*. But you didn't receive mine across the void like this.

Exit SUZANNE.

FIGARO, *alone*. What a ravishing girl! Always gay, laughing, full of sap, wit, love, joy—and how well behaved!

He walks about briskly, rubbing his hands.

Ah, my lord, my dear lord! You want to give me—something to remember? I was wondering, too, why I am first made Steward, and then supposed to become part of the embassy and serve as King's Messenger. Now I understand, Your Excellency: three promotions at one stroke—you as envoy plenipotentiary; myself as political lightning rod; and Suzy as lady in residence, as private ambassadress—and then, Sir Messenger, be off! While I gallop in one direction, you will drive my girl a long way in the other. While I wade through mud and break my neck for the glory of your family, you will collaborate in the increase of mine. What sweet reciprocity! But, my lord, there is excess in this. To carry on in London the business at once of the King your master and of your humble servant, to represent in a foreign court both him and me—that is too much by half, much too much. As for you, Basil, my pretty scoundrel, I will teach you to limp with the halt and the lame. I will—no! We must play up to both of them if we are to knock their heads together. Now, Figaro, concentrate on today. First, move ahead the time for the wedding, so as to make sure the knot is tied; then distract old Marceline, who is too fond of you; pick up whatever money and gifts there may be; mislead the Count and his little appetites; give a sound drubbing to Mister Basil, and—well, well, well, here is the fat doctor! The party is complete.

Enter BARTHOLO and MARCELINE.

Good morning, dear doctor of my heart. Is it my wedding with Suzy that brings you to the house?

BARTHOLO, *disdainful*. Not at all, my dear sir.

FIGARO. It would indeed be a generous act.

BARTHOLO. Exactly, and therefore inconceivably stupid.

FIGARO. It was my bad luck that I had to thwart your designs.*

BARTHOLO. Haven't you anything else to say?

FIGARO. Perhaps your mule hasn't been looked after?*

BARTHOLO, *furios*. Confounded babbler, leave us alone!

FIGARO. You are angry, Doctor? Yours is a cruel profession: no more kindness to animals than if they were men. Farewell, Marceline, are you still thinking of suing me at law? "Though thou love not, must thou therefore hate?"† I put it to the doctor.

BARTHOLO. What is all this about?

FIGARO, *leaving*. She will tell you.

Exit.

BARTHOLO, *looking at the departing FIGARO*. That fellow never improves. If someone doesn't flog him alive he will die inside the skin of the most conceited ass I know.

MARCELINE, *attracting his attention*. Well, here you are at last, Doctor Ubiquitous, you—always so grave and respectable that one could die waiting for your help, just as some time back someone got married despite your efforts.*

BARTHOLO. And you—always bitter and provoking. But why am I needed here so urgently? Has the Count met with an accident?

MARCELINE. No, Doctor.

BARTHOLO. And Rosine, his conspiring countess, could she be—God be praised—ailing?

MARCELINE. She is pining away.

BARTHOLO. What about?

MARCELINE. Her husband neglects her.

* An allusion to the events of *The Barber of Seville*, in which Figaro helped the Count to marry Rosine, the ward of Bartholo, who had himself planned to marry her. Rosine is now Countess Almaviva.

† A line from Voltaire's *Nanine*.

BARTHOLO, *with great satisfaction*. Ah, worthy husband, my avenger!

MARCELINE. It is hard to make out the Count: at once jealous and a philanderer.

BARTHOLO. A philanderer from boredom and jealous from vanity—it's clear as day.

MARCELINE. Today, for example, he is marrying off our Suzanne to Figaro, on whom he lavishes gifts in honor of this union . . .

BARTHOLO. Which His Excellency has made necessary?

MARCELINE. Not quite; but which His Excellency would like to celebrate in secret with the bride . . .

BARTHOLO. Of Mister Figaro? That's an arrangement the latter is surely willing to enter into.

MARCELINE. Basil is sure it is not so.

BARTHOLO. That other lout lives here too? *It's a regular den.* What does he do?

MARCELINE. All the evil he can. The worst is the hopeless passion he has so long-nursed for me.

BARTHOLO. In your place I should have disposed of that for good.

MARCELINE. How?

BARTHOLO. By marrying him.

MARCELINE. Tiresome, brutish wit! Why don't you dispose of mine in the same way? You're in honor-bound: remember all your promises—and also our little Emmanuel, offspring of a forgotten love, who was to lead us to the altar.

BARTHOLO. Was it to listen to this rigmarole that you had me come from Seville? . . . What is this fit of marrying you've suddenly fallen into?

MARCELINE. We'll say no more about it. But at least help me marry someone else.

BARTHOLO. Gladly. But what mortal, bereft of heaven and women's favors, would . . .

MARCELINE. Now, who *could* it be, Doctor, but the gay, handsome, lovable Figaro!

*B + M
have a child
he won't marry
her*

BARTHOLO. That good-for-nothing?

MARCELINE. Never cross, always good-humored, always ready to enjoy the passing moment, *Figaro* worrying as little about the future as about the past—attractive, generous, oh generous! . . .

BARTHOLO. . . . as a scamp . . .

MARCELINE. . . . as a lord. Delightful, in short. But he is a monster too.

BARTHOLO. What about his Suzanne?

MARCELINE. She'd never get him, clever as she is, if you would help me, dear Doctor, and hold him to a promissory note of his that I have.

BARTHOLO. On his wedding day?

MARCELINE. Weddings have gone farther than this and been broken off. If I didn't mind giving away a feminine secret—

BARTHOLO. There aren't any secrets for a physician.

MARCELINE. You know very well I have no secrets from you. Well, our sex is ardent but shy. A certain attraction may draw us toward pleasure, yet the most adventurous woman will say to herself—"be beautiful if you can, sensible if you will, but stay respectable: you must!" Now since every woman knows what reputation is worth, we can scare off Suzanne by threatening to expose the offers that are being made to her.

BARTHOLO. What will that accomplish?

MARCELINE. Just this: ashamed and apprehensive, she will keep on refusing the Count. He, from spite, will support my opposition to her marriage, and hence mine will become a certainty.

BARTHOLO. She's right, by God! *It's an excellent trick to marry off my old housekeeper to the scoundrel who pinched my young protégée.*

MARCELINE, *quickly*. . . . the man who plans to serve his pleasure and disappoint my hopes . . .

BARTHOLO. . . . the man who once upon a time swindled me out of a hundred pounds that I haven't forgotten.

MARCELINE. Ah, what bliss!—

BARTHOLO. To punish a swindler!—

MARCELINE. To marry him, Doctor, to marry him!

Enter SUZANNE.

SUZANNE, *holding a bonnet with large ribbons and a woman's dress over her arm.* To marry? To marry whom? My Figaro?

MARCELINE, *sourly.* Why not? Aren't you thinking of it yourself?

BARTHOLO, *laughing.* An angry woman's typical argument! We were speaking, Suzanne my dear, of his happiness in possessing you.

MARCELINE. To say nothing of my lord besides.

SUZANNE, *with a curtsy.* Your servant, madam. There is always a touch of gall in your remarks.

MARCELINE, *curtsying.* Your servant as well, madam. Where is the gall? Isn't it justice that a freehanded nobleman should share a little in the good things he procures for his people?

SUZANNE. He procures?

MARCELINE. Yes, madam.

SUZANNE. Fortunately, your jealousy is as well known as your claims on Figaro are slight.

MARCELINE. They could have been strengthened by the same means that you chose to use.

SUZANNE. But those means, madam, are open only to learned ladies.

MARCELINE. And this poor child is all innocence—like an old judge!

BARTHOLO, *pulling MARCELINE away.* Good-by, little bride of Figaro!

MARCELINE, *curtsying.* Also promised to the Count.

SUZANNE, *curtsying.* She gives you best regards, madam.

MARCELINE, *curtsying.* Will she also love me a little, madam?

SUZANNE, *curtsying.* As to that, pray have no fears.

MARCELINE, *curtsying.* Madam is as kind as she is pretty.

SUZANNE, *curtsying.* Enough, perhaps, to disconcert madam.

MARCELINE, *curtsying.* And above all, respectable.

SUZANNE, *curtsying.* That's a monopoly of dowagers.

MARCELINE, *outraged.* Dowagers, dowagers!

BARTHOLO, *interrupting her.* Marceline!

MARCELINE. Let's go, Doctor, or I shan't be able to restrain myself. Good-by, madam.

She curtsies.

Exeunt.

SUZANNE. Go, madam; go, pedant. I am as little afraid of your plots as I am of your insults. Look at the old sibyl! Because she has a little learning and used it to torment my lady in her youth, she wants to rule the castle.

Throws the dress from her arm to a chair.

I've forgotten what I came for.

Enter CHERUBINO.

CHERUBINO, *running in.* Suzy, I've been waiting two hours to catch you alone. I'm miserable: you're getting married and I'm going away.

SUZANNE. How does my getting married cause the departure of his lordship's favorite page?

CHERUBINO, *piteously.* Suzanne: he's dismissed me!

SUZANNE, *mimicking him.* Cherubino: what nonsense!

CHERUBINO. He found me yesterday at your cousin's, at Fanchette's. I was rehearsing her ingénue part in tonight's show and he flew into a rage on seeing me. "Get out," he said, "you little—" I don't dare repeat the bad word he used. "Get out! Tonight is your last night in this house!" If my lady, my dear godmother, doesn't calm him down about this, it's all over with me, Suzy; I'll never lay eyes on you again.

SUZANNE. On *me*? It's my turn, is it? So you don't go sighing around my lady any more?

CHERUBINO. Oh, Suzy. She is beautiful, majestic, but so-imposing!

SUZANNE. That is to say, I am not and you can take liberties.

CHERUBINO. You're mean! You know perfectly well I never dare take anything. How lucky you are, seeing her all the time, talking to her, dressing her in the morning, undressing her

at night, unpinning each pin— Oh, Suzy, I'd give anything—
What's that in your hand?

SUZANNE, *mockingly*. It's the blissful bonnet and the fortunate
ribbon which enclose, at night, the hair of your beautiful
godmother . . .

CHERUBINO. Her ribbon—at night! Give it to me, be a dear,
my love.

SUZANNE, *pulling it away*. Not so fast. "His love!" What fa-
miliarity! If you weren't just a whippersnapper—

CHERUBINO *seizes the ribbon*.

Oh, the ribbon!

CHERUBINO, *going behind and around the invalid chair*. You
can say you mislaid it, ruined it, lost it. Say anything you
like.

SUZANNE *chases after him around the chair*. I promise you that
in three or four years you will be the biggest little miscreant
on earth! Give me back that ribbon.

She snatches at it.

CHERUBINO, *drawing a paper from his pocket*. Let me, do let
me have it, Suzy. I'll give you my song here, and while the
memory of my beautiful mistress will sadden all my days,
the thought of you will bring me the only ray of joy that
could lighten my heart.

SUZANNE *tears the song out of his grasp*. "Lighten his heart!"
The little scoundrell! Do you think you are talking to your
Fanchette? My lord finds you with her; you breathe vows
in secret to my lady; and on top of that you make me de-
clarations to my face!

CHERUBINO, *excited*. It's true, on my honor! I don't know who
I am or what I'm doing, but just lately, at the mere sight
of a woman I've felt my breath come in gasps and my heart
beat fast. The words "love" and "bliss" arouse and upset me.
In short, the need to say to someone "I love you" has be-
come so compelling that I say it to myself when I cross the
park, I say it to our lady and to you, to the clouds and the
wind that carries my useless words away. Yesterday I ran
into Marceline—

SUZANNE, *laughing*. Ahahaha!

*C in love
w/ the
countess
+
all
the
women*

CHERUBINO. Why not? She's a woman! She's a maid! A maid!
A woman! Oh, what sweet words are those—and how in-
teresting!

SUZANNE. He is losing his mind.

CHERUBINO. Fanchette is very sweet: at least she listens to me
and you don't.

SUZANNE. What a pity! Let us listen to the gentleman.

She snatches again at the ribbon.

CHERUBINO *turns and runs*. Not on your life! No one can take
it, you see, except with *my* life. But if the price does not
suit you, I'll increase it by a thousand kisses.

He starts chasing her around the chair.

SUZANNE, *turning on him as she flees*. A thousand slaps in the
face if you come near me. I'll complain to my lady, and
far from interceding for you I'll go to my lord and say:
"Send back that petty thief to his parents. He is a good-for-
nothing who puts on airs about being in love with Madam,
and on the rebound tries to kiss me."

CHERUBINO *sees the COUNT entering and hides behind the arm-
chair*. That's the end of me!

SUZANNE. Coward!

Intercepts the COUNT and helps to conceal the PAGE.

COUNT, *coming forward*. You are upset, Suzette, you were
talking to yourself. Your little heart seems to me full of agita-
tion—understandably enough on a day like this.

SUZANNE, *embarrassed*. My lord, what do you want with me?
If someone saw us . . .

COUNT. I should hate to be surprised here. But you know the
interest I take in you. Basil must have told you I love you.
I have only a moment to tell you so myself. Listen—

He sits in the armchair.

SUZANNE. I will not listen.

COUNT, *taking her hand*. Just one word. You know the King
has made me ambassador to London—I am taking Figaro
with me, giving him an excellent post. Now since it is a
wife's duty to follow her husband—

SUZANNE. Oh, if I had the courage to speak—

COUNT, *drawing her to him*. Don't hesitate, speak, my dear.

Assume a privilege which you may use with me for life.

SUZANNE, *frightened*. I don't want to, my lord, I don't want to. Please leave me.

COUNT. But first tell me.

SUZANNE, *angrily*. I don't know what I was saying.

COUNT. Something about a wife's duty.

SUZANNE. Very well. When you, my lord, eloped with your lady from the Doctor's house and married her for love, and when in her honor you abolished that dreadful right of the lord of the manor—

COUNT. Which annoyed the girls so much, no doubt! Look, Suzette, it was a charming right and if you'll come and prattle with me about it this evening in the garden, I'll rate that little favor so high—

BASIL, *speaking from without*. My lord isn't in his room.

COUNT, *rising*. Whose voice is that?

SUZANNE. This is dreadfull

COUNT. Go out so that nobgdy comes in.

SUZANNE, *upset*. And leave you here?

BASIL, *from outside*. His lordship was with my lady, then he left; I'll go look for him.

COUNT. No spot where I can hide. Yes, behind that chair. It's not very good but—send him packing.

SUZANNE *bars his way; he gently pushes her; she retreats and thus comes between him and the PAGE. But while the COUNT stoops and takes CHERUBINO'S place, the latter throws himself kneeling on the seat and clings to the cushions.*

SUZANNE *picks up the dress she formerly carried, drapes it over the PAGE, and takes her stand in front of the chair.*

BASIL, *entering*. Did you by any chance see the Count, miss?

SUZANNE, *brusquely*. How could I? Please go.

BASIL, *coming nearer*. If you only think a little you will see there was nothing surprising about my question. Figaro is looking for him.

SUZANNE. So he's looking for the man who is his worst enemy after yourself.

COUNT, *aside*. Let's see how he takes my part.

BASIL. Is it being a man's enemy to wish his wife well?

SUZANNE, *Not in your book of rules, you vile corrupter.*

BASIL. What does anyone ask of you that you aren't going to bestow on another? Thanks to a lovely ceremony, the things that were forbidden yesterday will be required tomorrow.

SUZANNE. Disgusting wretch!

BASIL. Marriage being the most comic of all serious things, I had thought—

SUZANNE, *outraged*. Contemptible thought! Who gave you leave to come in here!

BASIL. There, there, naughty girl. God grant you peace! You'll do just as you like. But don't go thinking that I regard Mister Figaro as an impediment to my lord—and if it weren't for the little page . . .

SUZANNE, *shyly*. Don Cherubino?

BASIL, *mimicking her*. *Cherubino di amore*, yes. He's always buzzing about you and this morning again was at this door when I left you: say it isn't true.

SUZANNE. What lies! Slanderer! Go away!

BASIL. A slanderer because I see things as they are. Isn't it also for you the page has a song he carries mysteriously about him?

SUZANNE, *angrily*. For me indeed!

BASIL. Unless he made it up for her ladyship. Truth to tell, when he serves at table, they say that he cannot take his eyes off her. But let him look out: my lord is a brute upon that point.

SUZANNE, *outraged*. And you are a scoundrel, going about spreading gossip and ruining a wretched child who is already in disgrace with his master.

BASIL. Did I make it up? I say these things because everybody says them.

COUNT, *rising*. Who, everybody?

SUZANNE. Heavens!

BASIL. Ha ha!

COUNT. Run along, Basil, and see that the boy is sent away.

BASIL. I am truly sorry that I came in here.

SUZANNE, *upset*. Oh dear, oh dear!

COUNT. She is faint, help her into the chair?

SUZANNE, *fending him off energetically*. I don't want to sit.

To walk in here without leave is an outrage.

COUNT. But there are two of us with you, my dear. There's not the slightest danger.

BASIL. For my part, I deeply regret having made light of the page—since you overheard me. I was using it to ascertain her feelings, because essentially—

COUNT. Fifty pounds, a horse, and back to his parents.

BASIL. My lord, it was frivolous gossip.

COUNT. A young libertine whom I found only yesterday with the gardener's daughter.

BASIL. With Fanchette?

COUNT. In her room.

SUZANNE, *outraged*. Where my lord had business also?

COUNT, *cheerfully*. That's an idea!

BASIL. It is of good omen.

COUNT, *still cheerful*. Of course not. I was looking for your uncle Antonio, my drunken gardener, to give him some instructions. I knock. No one opens for quite a while. Your little cousin looks embarrassed. I grow suspicious while I talk to her and as I do so I cast an eye about. Behind the door there was a curtain of sorts, a wardrobe, something for old clothes. Without seeming to, I gently, slowly lift the curtain . . .

He illustrates by lifting the dress off the armchair.

And I see . . .

He catches sight of CHERUBINO.

. . . I say!

BASIL. Ha ha!

COUNT. This is as good as before.

BASIL. It's better.

COUNT, *to SUZANNE*. Congratulations, dear lady: hardly engaged to be married and yet able to manage such tricks! Was it to entertain my page that you wished to be alone? As for you, sir, whose behavior never varies, the only lack of respect for your godmother you had so far overlooked was to pay your addresses to her maid, who is the bride of your friend. But I will not allow Figaro, a man I love and esteem, to be the victim of this deception. Was he with you, Basil? SUZANNE, *indignant*. There is no deception and no victim.

Pointing.

He was here while you were talking to me.

COUNT, *carried away*. I hope you lie when you say so. His worst enemy could wish him nothing worse.

SUZANNE. He was asking me to beseech my lady to obtain his pardon from you. Your coming in upset him so much that he hid in the chair.

COUNT, *angrily*. Infernal cleverness! But I sat in that chair the moment I arrived.

CHERUBINO. Alas, my lord, I was shaking in my shoes behind it.

COUNT. Another trick! I stood there myself just now.

CHERUBINO. Forgive me, but that is when I came around and crouched inside.

COUNT. This young snake in the grass must be a—poisonous adder: he heard what we said?

CHERUBINO. On the contrary, my lord, I did my best to hear nothing at all.

COUNT. O treachery!

To SUZANNE.

You shan't marry Figaro!

BASIL. Moderation, if you please: someone's coming.

COUNT, *pulling CHERUBINO out of the armchair and setting him on his feet*. He would stay there in front of the whole world! *Enter FIGARO, the COUNTESS, FANCHETTE, with several footmen and country people dressed in white.*

FIGARO, *holding a woman's hat covered with white feathers and ribbons and speaking to the COUNTESS*. Only you, my lady, can obtain this favor for us.

COUNTESS. You hear him, Count? They imagine that I wield an influence I do not in fact possess. Still, as their request is not unreasonable—

COUNT, *embarrassed*. It would indeed have to be very much so—

FIGARO, *speaking low to SUZANNE*. Back up my attempt—

SUZANNE, *the same to FIGARO*. Which won't help any.

FIGARO, *in low voice*. Never mind, do it.

COUNT, *to FIGARO*. What is it you want?

FIGARO. My lord, your vassals, who are deeply touched by the abolition of a certain regrettable right that you gave up out of love for my lady—

COUNT. Well, the right *is* abolished; what are you getting at?

FIGARO. Only that it is high time the virtue of so good a master should be manifest. I myself stand to gain so much from it today that I want to be the first to glorify it at our wedding.

COUNT, *still more embarrassed*. You can't be serious. The abolition of a shameful right is only the payment of a debt to decency. A Spaniard may want to conquer beauty by devotion, but to be the first to exact the sweetest of rewards as if it were a servile due—why, that's the tyrannical violence of a Vandal, not the acknowledged right of a Castilian nobleman!

FIGARO, *holding SUZANNE's hand*. Then deign that this young creature, whose honor has been preserved by your noble reason, receive from your hand the virgin's coil of white feathers and ribbons as a symbol of the purity of your intentions. Have this ceremony become a custom at all weddings and let an appropriate chorus be sung each time to commemorate the event.

COUNT, *embarrassed*. If I did not know that to be a lover, a poet, and a musician excused every kind of folly—

FIGARO. Join with me, my friends.

ALL, *together*. My lord! My lord!

SUZANNE, *to the COUNT*. Why brush aside an honor you so much deserve?

COUNT, *aside*. Deceitful wench!

FIGARO. Look at her, my lord: no prettier face will ever signalize the extent of your sacrifice.

SUZANNE. Leave my face out of it and let us only praise his virtue.

COUNT, *aside*. The whole thing is a plot.

COUNTESS. I too join with them, Count, knowing as I do that this ceremony, ever to be cherished, owes its being to the gracious love you used to have for me.

COUNT. Which I still have, madam, and because of which I now yield.

ALL, *together*. Bravo!

COUNT, *aside*. I've been had.

Aloud.

In order to give the ceremony yet more splendor, I should like to see it postponed till somewhat later.

Aside.

Quick, let us get hold of Marceline!

FIGARO, *to CHERUBINO*. What about you, my lad, you don't applaud?

SUZANNE. He is in despair; his lordship is sending him home.

COUNTESS. Ah, my lord, I ask for his pardon.

COUNT. He doesn't deserve it.

COUNTESS. The poor boy is so young.

COUNT. Not so young as you think.

CHERUBINO, *trembling*. Clemency is not the lordly right you gave up when you married my lady.

COUNTESS. He only gave up the one that afflicted you all.

SUZANNE. If my lord had abandoned the right to pardon, it would surely be the first right he would want to restore in secret.

COUNT, *embarrassed*. Oh, quite.

COUNTESS. So what need to restore it?

CHERUBINO, *to the COUNT*. I was giddy in my actions, my lord, that is true. But there never was the least impropriety in my words.

COUNT, *embarrassed*. All right, that's enough.

FIGARO. What does he mean?

COUNT, *sharply*. Enough, enough! Everybody wants him pardoned: I so order it. I'll do more: I'll give him a company in my regiment.

ALL, *together*. Bravo!

COUNT. But on one condition—that he leave at once to join up in Catalonia.

FIGARO. Oh, my lord, make it tomorrow.

COUNT. I have given an order.

CHERUBINO. And I obey.

COUNT. Salute your godmother and entreat her protection.

CHERUBINO *kneels on one knee before the* COUNTESS, *unable to utter a word.*

COUNTESS, *much moved*. Since you cannot stay even for today, young man, go. New duties call you: fulfill them worthily. Honor your benefactor. Remember this house where your youth was so leniently treated. Be upright, obedient, and brave. We shall all share in the pleasure of your success.

CHERUBINO *gets up and goes back to where he stood before.*

COUNT. You seem deeply moved, madam.

COUNTESS. I do not apologize for it. Who knows what fate is in store for a child thrown into such a dangerous career? He is related to my family, as well as being my godson.

COUNT, *aside*. Basil was evidently right.

Aloud.

Young man, give a kiss to Suzanne, for the last time.

FIGARO. Why the last, my lord? He'll come and spend the winters with us. Give me a kiss too, captain.

They embrace.

Good-by, Cherubino. You are going to lead a very different life, my child. Thus: no more hanging about the women's quarters the livelong day, no more sweet drinks and pastries, no more blindman's buff and spinning the bottle. Just veteran soldiers, by God, weather-beaten and dressed in rags, a huge musket that weighs a ton—Right . . . turn!

Left . . . turn! Forward! march! To glory—and don't you go stumbling on the way—unless a well-placed shot!

SUZANNE. Horror! Be quiet!

COUNTESS. What a send-off!

COUNT. Where can Marceline be? Isn't it odd that she isn't with the rest of you?

FANCHETTE. My lord, she went walking to town, by the lane along the farm.

COUNT. And she is coming back?

BASIL. When it may please God.

FIGARO. May it please Him never to please . . .

FANCHETTE. The gentleman doctor was giving her his arm.

COUNT, *quickly*. The doctor is here?

BASIL. She fastened upon him at once . . .

COUNT, *aside*. He could not come at a better time.

FANCHETTE. She was all excited. She spoke very loud and paced back and forth and stopped and did like this with her arms. And the gentleman doctor, he did like this with his hand, to calm her down. She mentioned my cousin Figaro.

COUNT, *taking her chin in his hand*. Cousin . . . yet to be.

FANCHETTE, *pointing to* CHERUBINO. My lord, have you forgiven us for yesterday?

COUNT, *interrupting*. Good day, good day, my dear.

FIGARO. It's her confounded love that keeps her obsessed.* She would have spoiled our party.

COUNT, *aside*. She will spoil it yet, I promise you.

Aloud.

Come, madam, let us go in. Basil, please stop in to see me.

SUZANNE, *to* FIGARO. You'll be joining me, sonny?

FIGARO, *in low voice to* SUZANNE. Wasn't he properly stuck?

SUZANNE, *low*. Delightful character!†

Exeunt all but FIGARO, CHERUBINO, and BASIL.

* This remark refers to Marceline, not to Fanchette.

† She means Figaro.

*Tricking
COUNT*

FIGARO. By the way, you fellows: the new ceremony having been adopted, the show tonight becomes a sequel to it and we mustn't forget our lines. Let's not be like those players who never act so poorly as on the night when the critics are wide awake. We haven't any tomorrow to recoup ourselves, so let's learn our parts today.

BASIL, *maliciously*. Mine is more difficult than you think.

FIGARO, *in pantomime, unseen by BASIL, pretends to give him a beating*. But you don't suspect the ovation you will get.

CHERUBINO. Dear friend, you forget that I am leaving—

FIGARO. —when you would like to stay.

CHERUBINO. Oh, if I only could!

FIGARO. Then we must have a scheme. Not a murmur against your leaving. Traveling cloak on your shoulders. Make a show of packing, your horse at the gates, a brief gallop as far as the farm and come back on foot by the back way. My lord will think you gone: just keep out of his sight. I undertake to calm him down after the wedding party.

CHERUBINO. But Fanchette does not know her part.

BASIL. What the dickens were you teaching her this last week when you've hardly been away from her?

FIGARO. You have nothing to do today—for heaven's sake coach her in her lines.

BASIL. Be careful, young man, be careful! Her father is suspicious; the girl has been slapped and hasn't learned her lines—Cherubino, Cherubino, she will be sorry—the pot that goes once too often to the well . . .

FIGARO. Ah, there's our curmudgeon with his old proverbs. Tell us, you old pedant, what the wisdom of nations has to say about the pot that goes to the well.

BASIL. It gets filled.

FIGARO, *leaving*. Not so dumb as I thought.

5 Acts
1 DAY (see subtitle)

ACT II

A magnificent bedroom with a large bed in an alcove and a platform in front. The main door is upstage to the right, the dressing-room door downstage to the left. A third door, at the back, leads to the women's quarters. The window is on the opposite side. SUZANNE and the COUNTESS enter, right.

COUNTESS, *throws herself into a wing chair*. Shut the door, Suzanne, and tell me everything in detail.

SUZANNE. I do not mean to hold anything back, my lady.

COUNTESS. And so he wanted to seduce you?

SUZANNE. Certainly not! *(My lord does not take that much trouble with servants: he wanted to buy me.)*

COUNTESS. And the little page was there all the while?

SUZANNE. Yes, that is to say, he was hidden behind the big armchair. He had come to ask me to intercede with you for his pardon.

COUNTESS. Why not come to me direct? Do you suppose I would have refused him, Suzy?

SUZANNE. That's what I told him, but his sadness at leaving, especially at leaving you— "Ah, Suzy," he said, "how noble and beautiful she is, but how imposing!"

COUNTESS. Do I really look that way, Suzy, I who have always stood up for him?

SUZANNE. Then he saw the ribbon of your nightdress which I had in my hand and he jumped and grabbed it.

COUNTESS, *smiling*. My ribbon? What a child!

SUZANNE. I tried to take it from him, madam, but he was like a wild beast, his eyes shone: "You'll get it only with my life," he said, and his voice cracked.

COUNTESS, *dreamily*. And then, Suzy?

SUZANNE. Well, madam, how can one put a stop to it? The little devil! "My godmother," he says, and "I wish I could," says he. And just because he wouldn't even dare kiss the hem of your gown, my lady, he always wants to be kissing me in earnest.

COUNTESS, *still dreaming*. Enough . . . enough nonsense. At last, then, my husband came to the point and told you . . .

SUZANNE. . . . that if I refused to listen to him, he would use his influence in behalf of Marceline.

COUNTESS, *rising, pacing, and fanning herself vigorously*. He does not love me at all any more.

SUZANNE. Why then is he so jealous?

COUNTESS. Like every husband, my dear—it is pride. Ah, I loved him too much. I wearied him with my caresses, bored him with my love. That is my chief wrong in relation to him. But I do not intend that his charming thoughts should bring you harm; you shall marry Figaro. He alone can help us: is he going to join us?

SUZANNE. As soon as the hunt is on its way.

COUNTESS, *using her fan again*. Open the window on the garden a bit. It's exceedingly warm in here.

SUZANNE. That is because my lady has been talking and walking so actively.

She opens the window at the back.

COUNTESS, *absent-mindedly*. In avoiding me of set purpose . . . men are creatures full of guilt.

SUZANNE, *shouting from the window*. There is my lord riding through the big field. Peter is with him and one, two, three, four—setters.

COUNTESS. That gives us plenty of time.

She sits.

Someone is knocking, Suzy.

SUZANNE *runs singing to the door*. Why, it's my Figaro, it's my Figaro!

Enter FIGARO.

SUZANNE. Dear friend, come in. My lady can hardly wait.

FIGARO. And what about you, little Sue? Her ladyship must not take on so. After all, what is all the fuss about? —A trifle. My lord Count finds our young lady charming and would like to make her his mistress—perfectly natural.

SUZANNE. Natural?

FIGARO. Then he appointed me King's Messenger and my Suzy —er—attachée to the embassy. No mental confusion there.

SUZANNE. Are you through?

FIGARO. And because Suzanne, my bride, declines the post and privileges, he wants to promote the plans of Marceline. Could anything be more simple? To seek revenge on those who thwart our purpose by interfering with theirs is what everybody does, it's what we ourselves are about to do. And that, so to speak, is that.

COUNTESS. Figaro, how can you joke about a project that will rob us all of happiness?

FIGARO. Who says it will, my lady?

SUZANNE. Instead of sharing our grief, you—

FIGARO. Isn't it enough that I am busy about it? No, no, let us be as methodical as he, and cool his desire for our belongings by arousing in him an apprehension for his own.

COUNTESS. A good idea, but how?

FIGARO. It is all done, madam. A piece of false information about you—

COUNTESS. About me! You are out of your mind!

FIGARO. No: it is he who must be driven out of his.

COUNTESS. A man as jealous as he—

FIGARO. So much the better. To make the most out of people like him, *(all you have to do is to whip up their blood—a device all women use.)* As soon as a man of his type is red-hot with passion, the most trifling subterfuge enables one to lead him by the nose into the nearest fishpond. I have used Basil to deliver an anonymous note which informs his lordship that tonight a gallant will try to approach you during the ball.

COUNTESS. You play fast and loose with the truth about a woman of honor?

It is confidence in his own resolution

FIGARO. There are but few I would have dared to risk it with, madam, for fear of stating no more than the facts.

COUNTESS. So now you'll expect me to thank you!

FIGARO. Honestly, isn't it delightful to have cut out his work for him so that he will be prowling around his lady and swearing under his breath during the time that he counted on for dallying with mine? Already he is bewildered: will he gallop over this one, shall he mount guard over that one?

At the window.

In his disturbed state of mind—look, look, how he races across the meadow after a poor hare who can't help himself! The hour of the wedding hastens on, but he won't be able to decide against it: he will never dare oppose it to my lady's face.

SUZANNE. No, but Marceline, that *grande dame*, will not hesitate to dare.

FIGARO. Ah! That doesn't worry me. Just let my lord know that you will meet him at dusk in the garden.

SUZANNE. So that's your great device—to rely on him?

FIGARO. See here: people who don't want to do anything about anything never achieve anything and aren't good for anything. That's my last word.] x

SUZANNE. A pleasant one!

COUNTESS. And so is her question: you really would let her meet him in the garden?

FIGARO. Not at all. I'll arrange for someone to put on one of Suzy's dresses. Taken in the act, how can he get out of it?

SUZANNE. Who will wear my dress?]

FIGARO. Cherubino.

COUNTESS. He's gone.

FIGARO. Not as far as I'm concerned. Will the ladies allow me?

SUZANNE. One can always trust this fellow to hatch a scheme.

FIGARO. A scheme! Two, three, or four at once, well scrambled and working from both ends against the middle. I was born to be a courtier.

SUZANNE. They say it's a difficult profession.

FIGARO. Accept, take, and ask—that's the secret in three words.

COUNTESS. He has so much self-confidence it rubs off on me!

FIGARO. That was my idea.

SUZANNE. You were saying?

FIGARO. That during the Count's absence I will send you Cherubino. Dress him up and do his hair and I'll conceal and indoctrinate him. After which, my lord, how you will dance! *Exit.*

COUNTESS, *holding her box of patches.* Heavens, Suzy, I look a sight, and this young man is coming in!

SUZANNE. Don't you want him to get over it?

COUNTESS, *gazing in the mirror.* If You'll see how I'm going to scold him!

SUZANNE. Let's get him to sing his romance.

She lays it on the COUNTESS's lap.

COUNTESS. But really my hair is in a state—

SUZANNE. I'll just roll up these two curls; they will help your ladyship to scold him.

COUNTESS, *returning to reality.* What are you saying, missy?

SUZANNE. Come in, officer. We are visible.

Enter CHERUBINO.

CHERUBINO, *trembling.* Oh how that title distresses me, madam.

It tells me I must leave a place . . . a godmother . . . so good to me.

SUZANNE. And so beautiful.

CHERUBINO, *with a sigh.* Oh, yes.

SUZANNE, *mimicking him.* "Oh, yes." The nice young man, with his long, hypocritical lashes. Come, bluebird, sing us a song for my lady.

COUNTESS, *unfolding the paper.* Whose is it?

SUZANNE. See the guilty blush: it's a foot deep on his face.

CHERUBINO. Is it forbidden to—cherish?

SUZANNE, *shaking her fist in his face.* I am going to tell on you, ne'er-do-well!

COUNTESS. Enough. Does he sing?

CHERUBINO. Please, madam, I am shaking all over.

SUZANNE, *laughing and mimicking*. Nya, nya, nya, nya, nya, nya, nya. As soon as madam wishes. These modest authors! I'll accompany him.

COUNTESS. Take my guitar.

Seated, she holds the paper to follow the words. SUZANNE, behind her armchair, begins the introduction, reading the notes over her mistress's head. The PAGE stands in front, his eyes lowered. The scene duplicates the beautiful print made from Vanloo's painting entitled "Conversation in Spain."

(To the tune of "Malbrouck")*

My weary steed astride
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
Uncaring where, I ride
The solitary plain.

Uncaring where I ride,
No squire is at my side,
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
For my godmother I pine,
And weep for her in vain.

For her I weep in vain,
And as the fates decree,
I carve upon a tree
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
The letters of her name—
The King that moment came.

The King that moment came,
His bishops and his peers.
"Sweet page," spoke up the Queen,
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
"Tis sore distress, I ween,
"That draws from you these tears.

* As in Beaumarchais, the verses do not everywhere fit the tune accurately. But his ballad, being an early (though feeble) attempt to imitate folk poetry, deserves to be translated as closely as possible.

"What draws from you these tears,
"Declare to us, poor lad.""**

"My lady Queen, my lord,"
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
"A godmother I had,
"Whom always I adored—

"Whom always I adored
"And I'll die dreaming of.""**

"Sweet page," the Queen implored,
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
"That godmother you love,
"Pray let me take her place.

"Yes, let me take her place,
"And give you, page of mine,
"A maiden fair of face
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
"A captain's daughter true,
"To whom I'll marry you."

"To whom I'll marry you!"
"Those words I must deny
"And for one favor sue:
(*Oh my heart, oh my heart, it is breaking*)
"To let me live in grief,
"And from my grieving die."

COUNTESS. It is full of naïve simplicity, and even of true sentiment.

SUZANNE, *laying the guitar on a chair*. Oh, as far as sentiment goes, this young man is— But say, officer, have you been told that to enliven this evening's party we need to know whether one of my gowns will more or less fit you?

COUNTESS. I'm afraid it won't.

SUZANNE, *comparing their statures*. He's about my size. Let's take off the coat.

She takes it off him.

COUNTESS. What if someone comes in?

SUZANNE. We're not doing anything wrong. I'll shut the door.

She runs.

But it's the hair I want to see.

COUNTESS. In my dressing room, one of my wrappers.

SUZANNE goes into the dressing room.

COUNTESS. Until the ball opens, the Count will not know that you are still in the castle. We shall tell him afterward that the time required to prepare your commission gave us the idea of—

CHERUBINO, *showing her the paper.* Unfortunately, madam, my commission is here, signed. Basil gave it to me from my lord.

COUNTESS. Already! Not a minute lost.

She reads.

In such a hurry that he forgot to affix the seal.

She hands it back.

SUZANNE, *carrying also a wide-brimmed hat.* The seal to what?

COUNTESS. His commission.

SUZANNE. Already?

COUNTESS. That's what I was saying. Is that the wrapper?

SUZANNE, *seated near the COUNTESS.* The handsomest of all.

She sings with pins in her mouth.

*Turn your head, oh Johnny my dear,
Turn, my handsome cavalier.*

CHERUBINO *kneels beside her to have his hair dressed.*

Madam, he is sweet!

COUNTESS. Pull his collar more like a woman.

SUZANNE. There—look at that ragamuffin, what a pretty girl he makes. I'm jealous.

She takes his chin in her hand.

Will you please not be so pretty as you are?

COUNTESS. Silly girl! You must turn back the cuff so that the undersleeve shows up better.

She lifts the sleeve.

What has he put on his arm? —A ribbon!

SUZANNE. *Your ribbon.* I am glad madam saw it. I warned him I would tell on him. I swear, if my lord had not come in, I would have got the ribbon back. I'm almost as strong as he is.

COUNTESS. I see blood.

She takes off the ribbon.

CHERUBINO, *shamefaced.* This morning, when I knew I had to leave, I was adjusting the snaffle on my horse. He tossed his head and the boss on the bit scratched my arm.

COUNTESS. But why put a ribbon—

SUZANNE. A *stolen* ribbon at that! Just imagine what the baffle—the snaffle—the raffle—I can't keep these things straight—look at that white skin! It's a woman's arm, whiter than mine, see?

She compares.

COUNTESS, *freezingly.* Kindly get me some court plaster from my dressing table.

SUZANNE gives CHERUBINO a shove; he falls forward on his hands. She goes into the dressing room. The COUNTESS remains silent a moment, her eyes on the ribbon. CHERUBINO gazes at her intently.

As to my ribbon, sir—it's the color I find most becoming to me—I was very much annoyed to be without it.

SUZANNE, *returning.* The bandage for his arm.

She gives the COUNTESS the plaster and a pair of scissors.

COUNTESS. When you go for your dress, bring back the ribbon from some other bonnet.

SUZANNE leaves by the center door, taking the PAGE's coat with her.

CHERUBINO, *eyes lowered.* The ribbon you're taking from me would have cured me in no time.

COUNTESS. Owing to what specific virtue?

Pointing to the plaster.

That is so much better.

CHERUBINO, *hesitating.* When a ribbon . . . has bound the head . . . or touched the skin . . . of a person . . .

COUNTESS, *breaking in*. . . . of a stranger, it cures wounds?

That is news to me. I will test it by keeping the one you put around your arm. At the first scratch—on one of my maids—I shall try it out.

CHERUBINO, *deeply moved*. You are keeping it—but I'm leaving!

COUNTESS. But not forever.

CHERUBINO. I'm so unhappy!

COUNTESS, *moved*. Now he is weeping. It's Figaro's fault for prophesying—

CHERUBINO. Oh, how I wish the time had come that he spoke about! If I were sure of dying at once, perhaps my lips would dare—

COUNTESS *interrupts by wiping his eyes with her handkerchief*. Be quiet, child, be quiet. There isn't a grain of sense in what you're saying.

A knock at the door; she raises her voice.

Who is it?

COUNT, *outside*. Why are you locked in?

COUNTESS, *upset*. It's my husband. Heavens! . . .

To CHERUBINO, *who has also got up*.

You, without your coat, your collar open and your arms bare—alone with me—the general disarray—the anonymous letter he received, his jealousy—

COUNT, *outside*. You won't open?

COUNTESS. The fact is . . . I am alone.

COUNT. Alone? With whom are you talking, then?

COUNTESS, *fumbling*. With you, I should think.

CHERUBINO, *aside*. After those scenes of yesterday and this morning he would kill me on the spot.

He runs into the dressing room and shuts the door.

COUNTESS *removes the key and opens the other door to admit the* COUNT. What a dreadful mistake!

COUNT, *somewhat severe*. You are not in the habit of shutting yourself up.

COUNTESS, *upset*. I was trying on—yes—odds and ends—with Suzanne. She went for a minute to her room.

COUNT. You look and sound quite strange.

COUNTESS. It's not surprising, not surprising at all, I assure you.

We were speaking about you. She just left, as I said—

COUNT. You were speaking about me? Well, here I am. I've come back much disturbed. On setting out, I was handed a note—though I take no stock in it—it upset me.

COUNTESS. How so, what note, sir?

COUNT. You must admit, madam, that you or I must be surrounded by people who are—uncommonly wicked. Someone informs me that a person, whom I falsely suppose to be absent, will attempt to approach you.

COUNTESS. Whoever this rash being may be, he will have to make his way to this very spot, for I do not intend to stir for the rest of the day.

COUNT. What about tonight, for Suzanne's wedding?

COUNTESS. Not on any account; I am quite indisposed.

COUNT. Fortunately the doctor is here.

The PAGE overturns a chair in the dressing room.

What noise was that?

COUNTESS, *distraught*. Noise?

COUNT. Someone in there upset a piece of furniture.

COUNTESS. I—I heard nothing.

COUNT. You must be powerfully preoccupied.

COUNTESS. Preoccupied? What about?

COUNT. Madam: there is someone in that dressing room!

COUNTESS. Indeed, who could there be, sir?

COUNT. It is for me to ask that question: I have just arrived.

COUNTESS. It must be Suzanne putting things away.

COUNT. You told me she had gone to her room.

COUNTESS. Gone there—or here—I don't know which.

COUNT. If it is Suzanne, why your evident distress?

COUNTESS. Distress—over my maid?

COUNT. Over your maid it may be, but distress without a doubt.

COUNTESS. Without a doubt, sir, that girl concerns and occupies your mind much more than I.

COUNT. She concerns me so much that I want to see her at once.

COUNTESS. I readily believe that this is what you often want. But your ill-founded suspicions—

SUZANNE *enters at the back, unseen, with clothes in her arms.*

COUNT. If so, they will be easily dispelled.

He speaks through the dressing-room door.

Come out, Suzanne, I order you to.

SUZANNE *stops near the alcove at the back.*

COUNTESS. She is almost naked, sir. How can you intrude in this way on women in their apartments? She was trying on some old things I am giving her on the occasion of her wedding. She fled when she heard you.

COUNT. If she is afraid to show herself, she can at least speak.

He turns again to the closed door.

Answer me, Suzanne: are you in the dressing room?

SUZANNE, *still at the back of the alcove, hides behind the bed.*

COUNTESS, *quickly, to the closed door.* Suzy, I forbid you to answer.

To the COUNT.

No one has ever carried tyranny so far!

COUNT, *turning again.* If she won't speak, dressed or undressed I shall see her.

COUNTESS, *intercepting him.* Anywhere else I can't prevent you, but I trust that in my own room—

COUNT. And I trust that in one minute I shall know who this mysterious Suzanne is. I can see it is useless to ask you for the key, but it is not hard to break down this trumpery door. Ho, there, anybody!

COUNTESS. You would bring in your people, create a public scandal—all on the strength of a vague suspicion! We'll be the talk of the castle.

COUNT. An excellent point, madam, I can do without help. This instant I go to my rooms and return with what I need.

He starts to go and turns back.

But in order that everything shall remain as it is, will you kindly accompany me, quietly and decently—since scandal displeases you so? My simple request will surely not be denied?

COUNTESS, *upset.* Sir, who would dream of crossing you?

COUNT. Oh, I was forgetting: the door which leads to your maids' quarters. I must also shut it so that you may be fully vindicated.

He shuts the center door and takes the key.

COUNTESS, *aside.* Oh, what a fateful whim!

COUNT, *returning.* Now that this chamber is sealed, I beg you to accept my arm.

He raises his voice.

As for the Suzanne in the dressing room, she will have the goodness to await my return. The least of the evils that may befall her then is—

COUNTESS. Really, sir, this is the most odious performance—
The COUNT leads her out and locks the door.

SUZANNE *runs from the alcove to the dressing-room door and speaks through the keyhole.* Open up, Cherubino, open, quick, it's Suzanne, open and hurry out.

CHERUBINO, *coming out.* Oh, Suzy, what a dreadful mess!

SUZANNE. Go, go, you haven't a minute to lose.

CHERUBINO, *frightened.* How can I get out?

SUZANNE. Don't ask me, just go.

CHERUBINO. But I can't if I'm locked in.

SUZANNE. After this afternoon's encounter he would break you, and she and I would be doomed. Go tell Figaro—

CHERUBINO. Maybe the window over the garden isn't too high up.

He runs to see.

SUZANNE, *frightened.* A whole story—you can't do it! Oh, my poor lady! And my marriage, dear God!

CHERUBINO, *coming back*. It overlooks the melon patch. All it would spoil is a couple of beds.

SUZANNE, *holding him back and crying out*. You will kill yourself!

CHERUBINO, *excited*. I'd throw myself into an open furnace—I would, Suzy—rather than cause her harm. And a kiss from you will bring me luck.

Kisses her, runs toward the window, and leaps out.

SUZANNE *again cries out; then, overcome, falls into a chair, finally drags herself to the window and comes back*. He's off and away, the young devill! As light on his feet as he's pretty to look at. He'll have all the women he wants, I bet. Now to take his place, quick!

Goes into the dressing room.

From here on, my lord, you can tear down the wall if it gives you pleasure, you don't get a word out of me.

Shuts the door.

The COUNT and COUNTESS return. He holds a pair of pliers which he soon throws upon a chair.

COUNT. Everything is as I left it. Madam, if you compel me to break down that door you must think of the consequences: once again, will you open it yourself?

COUNTESS. But sir, what singular ill-temper can so destroy considerateness between husband and wife? If it were love that possessed you to the point of causing this fury, I could excuse it, however demented. The motive could make me forget the offense. But how can mere vanity move a well-bred man to such excesses?

COUNT. Love or vanity, you open that door or I do it on the spot.

COUNTESS, *before the door*. My lord, please desist! Can you think me capable of forgetting what I owe to my self-respect?

COUNT. Put it any way you like, madam, I mean to see who is in that dressing room.

COUNTESS, *frightened*. Very well, you shall see. But first listen to me quietly.

COUNT. So it isn't Suzanne?

COUNTESS, *embarrassed*. At least it isn't a person . . . about whom you should have any . . . we were bent on a practical joke . . . quite harmless, really, for this evening . . . and I swear to you . . .

COUNT. You swear to me—what?

COUNTESS. That neither he nor I meant to offend you.

COUNT. He—it is a man, then?

COUNTESS. A child, dear sir.

COUNT. And who, pray tell?

COUNTESS. I hardly dare give his name.

COUNT, *furious*. I'll kill him!

COUNTESS. Merciful powers!

COUNT. Speak up!

COUNTESS. The young . . . Cherubino.

COUNT. That impudent whelp! That explains my suspicions—and the anonymous note.

COUNTESS, *her hands joined in prayer*. Oh, sir, do not allow yourself to suppose—

COUNT, *stamping his foot and speaking aside*. That accursed page turns up wherever I go.

Aloud.

Come, madam, now that I know everything, open up. You would not have been so moved saying good-by to him this morning, you would not have used such elaborate lies in your tale of Suzanne, and he would not have hidden so quickly and so long, unless misconduct and guilt were the reason.

COUNTESS. He was afraid of irritating you by showing himself.

COUNT, *beside himself, shouting at the dressing-room door*.

Come out of there, you little scrub!

COUNTESS, *seizing the COUNT with both arms and thrusting him aside*. My dear sir, my dear sir, your anger makes me afraid for him. Don't, I beg, trust your own suspicions, which are unjust, and don't let his disheveled state—

COUNT. Disheveled!

COUNTRESS. Alas, you will see—one of my bonnets on his head, without his coat, his neckband open and arms bare, ready to dress up as a woman. He was going to try to—

COUNT. And you wanted to stay all day in your room! Worthless woman! You shall keep to your room—I shall see to it—and for a long time! But first I must kick out that insolent stripling that I may never come upon him again.

COUNTRESS, *on her knees, arms uplifted*. Count, you must spare a mere child. I shall never forgive myself for being the cause of—

COUNT. Your fears deepen his guilt.

COUNTRESS. He is not guilty—he was leaving. It is I who had him fetched.

COUNT, *in anger*. Get up. Remove yourself—shameless woman, to dare entreat me in behalf of another.

COUNTRESS. Very well. I will remove myself, I will get up and give you the key to the door, but in the name of your love—

COUNT. My love, hypocrite!

COUNTRESS *gets up and gives him the key*. Promise that you will let the child go harmless—and may you vent your fury on me later if I do not convince you that—

COUNT, *taking the key*. I'm no longer listening.

COUNTRESS *throws herself into an armchair, her handkerchief over her face*. God, oh God, he will be killed!

COUNT *opens the door*. You!

SUZANNE *comes out laughing*. "I will kill him—I will kill him!" Why *don't* you kill him, your villainous page?

COUNT, *aside*. Lord! What a lesson!

Looking at the COUNTRESS, *who is stupefied*.

And you pretend to be surprised, too? But perhaps Suzanne wasn't alone.

He goes in.

SUZANNE, *going to* COUNTRESS. Recover yourself, madam, he's nowhere near—he jumped (*gesture*).

COUNTRESS. Oh, Suzy, I am all in.

COUNT *emerges, vexed and silent*. There's no one else and this time I was wrong. Madam, you are a good actress—

SUZANNE. What about me, my lord?

COUNTRESS *holds her handkerchief to her mouth and says nothing, to regain her composure*.

COUNT, *approaching*. And so, madam, you were joking?

COUNTRESS, *recovering*. And why not, sir?

COUNT. An absurd practical joke, and for what reason, tell me?

COUNTRESS. Does your outrageous behavior deserve consideration?

COUNT. Do you call outrageous what relates to honor?

COUNTRESS, *gradually herself again*. Did I join my life to yours only to be a perpetual victim of your neglect and your jealousy, two things which only you can reconcile? /v

COUNT. Ah, madam, you spare me nothing—

SUZANNE. She did! My lady had only to let you call the servants—

COUNT. You are right and I abase myself. Forgive me. I am discomfited.

SUZANNE. And deserve to be, you must admit. to her "lord"

COUNT. But why wouldn't you come out when I called to you?

SUZANNE. I was putting on some clothes as well as I could, with a multitude of pins: my lady's forbidding me to stir was for a good reason.

COUNT. Instead of reminding me of my error, help me to soothe her.

COUNTRESS. No, my lord, an offense such as this is not to be palliated. I am about to retire to a convent. It is high time I did.

COUNT. Shall you be without regrets?

SUZANNE. For my part, I am sure the day you leave will be the beginning of endless grief.

COUNTRESS. Even if it is, Suzy, I'd rather miss him than basely forgive him. He has wounded me too deeply.

COUNT. Rosine!

COUNTRESS. I am Rosine no longer, the Rosine you so tenaciously pursued. I am the poor Countess Almaviva, the sad forsaken wife you no longer love.

greet,
Alviva

SUZANNE. Oh, madam!

COUNT, *suppliant*. For charity's sake!

COUNTESS. When have you ever shown me any?

COUNT. But that anonymous letter—it curdled my blood.

COUNTESS. I did not agree to its being written.

COUNT. You knew about it?

COUNTESS. It was that harebrained Figaro—

COUNT. He was party to it?

COUNTESS. —who gave it to Basil—

COUNT. —who told me he had it from a peasant. Oh, sinister singing-master, two-faced underling: you shall pay for everybody's crimes!

COUNTESS. How like a man! You beg for yourself a forgiveness you deny to others. Let me tell you: if ever I consent to pardon you for the error you committed on the strength of that note, I shall demand that the amnesty be general.

COUNT. With all my heart, Countess. But how can I ever make up for so humiliating a blunder?

COUNTESS, *rising*. It humiliated us both.

COUNT. No, no, only myself, believe me. But I am still amazed at the ease with which you women take on the proper look and tone of each circumstance. You were flushed, crying, your face was working—I assure you, you still look undone.

COUNTESS, *trying to smile*. I was flushing with resentment against your suspiciousness. But men are not delicate enough creatures to distinguish between the indignation of an honorable person suffering outrage and the confusion produced by a justified accusation.

COUNT, *smiling*. What about the disheveled page, coatless and half naked?

COUNTESS, *pointing to SUZANNE*. There he is. Aren't you glad to have caught this one instead of the other? Generally speaking, you do not hate to catch this one.

COUNT, *laughing*. And your entreaties and simulated tears?

COUNTESS. You make me laugh and I do not feel like it.

COUNT. We men think we are practiced in the art of politics,

but we are children. It is you, you madam, whom the King should appoint ambassador to London! Your sex must have made a deep study of the art of controlling the countenance to succeed as you did today.

COUNTESS. We are forced into it—and always by men.

SUZANNE. But put us on parole and you will see what honorable beings we are.

COUNTESS. Enough for the moment, Count. Possibly I went too far, but my leniency in so grave a case must be matched by yours.

COUNT. Do say again that you forgive me.

COUNTESS. Have I said it at all, Suzy?

SUZANNE. I did not hear it, madam.

COUNT. Well then, let the words slip out.

COUNTESS. You think you deserve it, you ungrateful man?

COUNT. I do, I do—because I repent.

SUZANNE. To suspect a man in my lady's dressing room!

COUNT. She has already punished me so severely!

SUZANNE. Not to believe her when she says it is her chambermaid!

COUNT. Rosine, are you unrelenting?

COUNTESS. Oh, Suzy, how weak I am! What a poor example I give you!

Holding out her hand to the COUNT.

No one will ever believe again in a woman's anger.

SUZANNE. It's all right, madam. One always comes to this with men.

The COUNT ardently kisses his wife's hand.

FIGARO *enters, breathless*. I heard that madam was seriously unwell. I've been running. I see there is no truth in the report.

COUNT, *dryly*. You are most attentive.

FIGARO. It is my duty. But since there is nothing in it, my lord, let me say that all your younger vassals of either sex are downstairs with their violins and pipes, awaiting the mo-

ment when you will allow me to bring my bride, so that they may accompany—

COUNT. And who will look after the Countess indoors?

FIGARO. Look after her—but she's not ill?

COUNT. No, but there is a mysterious stranger who will try to approach her. . . .

FIGARO. What stranger?

COUNT. The man in the note that you gave to Basil.

FIGARO. Who said I gave him a note?

COUNT. Even if I hadn't been told, rascal, I could read it in your lying face.

FIGARO. Then it's my face deceiving you, not I.

SUZANNE. Figaro, my poor darling, don't waste your eloquence in defeat: we told his lordship everything.

FIGARO. Told what? You treat me as if I were Basil!

SUZANNE. Told him you had written a note to make my lord believe that when he came in here he would find the young page in the dressing room where I shut myself up.

COUNT. What have you to say to that?

COUNTESS. There's no further need to conceal anything, Figaro, the joke is over.

FIGARO, *trying to guess*. The joke is over?

COUNT. Yes, over, consummated: what do you say to that?

FIGARO. Consummated? I say that—that I wish I could say the same about my marriage. You have only to give the word—

COUNT. You admit the anonymous note?

FIGARO. Since my lady wants it so, and Suzanne wants it so, and you want it so, I can't help wanting it too. But if I were you, my lord, really, I wouldn't believe a word of anything we are telling you.

COUNT. You're always telling lies and always in the teeth of evidence; it's beginning to get on my nerves.

COUNTESS, *laughing*. The poor fellow! Why should you expect, sir, that he would tell the truth even once?

FIGARO, *low, to SUZANNE*. I've warned him of the danger ahead—that's all a gentleman can do.

SUZANNE, *low*. Did you see the page?

FIGARO, *low*. Yes, all rumped.

SUZANNE, *low*. Oh, wretched!

COUNTESS. Look, my dear Count, they long to be united. Their impatience is understandable: let us go and celebrate the wedding.

COUNT, *aside*. But Marceline . . . where is Marceline?

Aloud.

I'd like a moment to dress.

COUNTESS. To be with our own people? You see what I have on.

ANTONIO, *half tipsy, holding a pot of partly crushed flowers*. My lord, my lord!

COUNT. What do you want with me, Antonio?

ANTONIO. I wish you'd have the windows over my beds fitted with bars. They throw every kind of thing out of those windows, a while back they threw out a man.

COUNT. Out of these windows?

ANTONIO. Just look at my gillyflowers!

SUZANNE, *low, to FIGARO*. Look out, Figaro, on your toes!

FIGARO. My lord, he gets drunk every day from the crack of dawn.

ANTONIO. You're wrong—with me there's always a little left over from the day before. But that's how people judge you—in the dark.

COUNT, *breathing fire*. The man, the man, where is he?

ANTONIO. Where he is?

COUNT. Yes, where?

ANTONIO. That's what I say. I want to have him found. I'm your servant. There's only me takes real care of your garden. Man falls on it—you can't help . . . appreciating . . . my reputation is . . . uprooted.

SUZANNE, *low, to FIGARO*. Change the subject, quick!

FIGARO. Won't you ever give up drinking?

ANTONIO. If I didn't drink I'd go out of my mind.

COUNTESS. But to drink as you do, without thirst . . .

ANTONIO. To drink without thirst and make love at any time, my lady, 'swhat distinguishes us from the other animals. > r (smiley)

COUNT, *fiercely*. Answer me or I'll have you thrown on the parish.

ANTONIO. I wouldn't go.

COUNT. What's that?

ANTONIO, *touching his forehead*. If *that* isn't enough to make you keep a good servant, on my side I'm not so dumb as to get rid of a good master.

COUNT, *shaking him violently*. You say they threw a man out the window.

ANTONIO. Yes, excellency, just a while back, in a white vest, and he picked himself up and ran away.

COUNT, *impatient*. And then?

ANTONIO. I tried to run after him, but I bumped into the fence so hard my finger . . .

He shows which.

. . . is still numb. It can't move hand or foot of itself.

COUNT. But you'd recognize the man?

ANTONIO. That I could if I had seen him, as you might say.

SUZANNE, *low, to FIGARO*. He never saw him.

FIGARO. What a pother about a pot! How long do you mean to carry on about your bluebells, you old watering jug? No use asking, my lord, it was I who jumped down.

COUNT. You? Why?

ANTONIO. "How long I carry on," eh? Why, you must have grown since I saw you jump, 'cause you were smaller and thinner at the time.

FIGARO. Naturally: when one jumps one gathers oneself together.

ANTONIO. Methought 'twas rather the whippersnapper I saw—the page.

COUNT. Cherubino, you mean?

FIGARO. Of course, having come back—he and his horse—from the gates of Seville, where he probably is now.

ANTONIO. I didn't say that, I didn't say that! I didn't see a horse jump, or I'd say so.

COUNT. Oh, to be patient!

FIGARO. I was in the women's quarters in my white vest—terribly hot day. I was waiting there for Suzanette, when suddenly I heard your voice, my lord, and a great noise going on. I don't know why, I was seized with fear—perhaps about the anonymous note. . . . To make a clean breast of it, I lost my head and jumped down on the flowers, spraining my ankle for my pains.

He rubs his foot.

ANTONIO. As it's you, then I've got to give you back this bit of paper that fell out of your vest when you landed.

COUNT, *snatching it*. Give it to me.

He unfolds the paper and folds it again.

FIGARO, *aside*. This is the end.

COUNT, *to FIGARO*. Your great fright has surely not made you forget the contents of this paper, nor how it got into your pocket?

FIGARO, *embarrassed, looks into all his pockets, bringing out letters and papers*. Oh, certainly not—but I carry so many about me—every one has to be answered.

He looks at a paper.

This, for instance, what's—? Ah, yes, a letter from Marceline, four pages, a beautiful letter. Could that other one be the petition from that poacher who is in prison? No—here it is. I also had a list of the furniture in the pavilion, in my other pocket—

The COUNT reopens the paper in his hand.

COUNTESS, *low, to SUZANNE*. Heavens, Suzy, it's the officer's commission.

SUZANNE, *low, to FIGARO*. We're undone: it's the commission!

COUNT, *folding the paper*. Well, resourceful sir, you can't guess?

ANTONIO, *going toward FIGARO*. My lord says as how can't you guess?

FIGARO, *pushing him away*. Hence, varlet, and don't speak into my nose!

COUNT. You cannot recall for me what the paper might be?

FIGARO. Ah, ah, ah! I have it! The poor boy! It must be Cherubino's commission, which the dear child showed me and I forgot to give back. What a scatterbrain I am! But how can he manage without his commission? We must go after him—

COUNT. Why should he have given it to you?

FIGARO, *embarrassed*. He wanted—something done to it.

COUNT *looks at paper*. There's nothing needs doing.

COUNTESS, *low*, to SUZANNE. The seal.

SUZANNE, *low*, to FIGARO. The seal's not on it.

COUNT, to FIGARO. You have nothing to say?

FIGARO. Yes, the fact is . . . something *is* missing. He says it is customary.

COUNT. Customary? What is customary?

FIGARO. To affix the seal showing your coat of arms. But perhaps it isn't worth the trouble.

COUNT *reopens the paper and crumples it up angrily*. Confound it! My fate decrees that I'm to be kept in the dark.

Aside.

This—this Figaro is the mastermind, and I—I should keep from striking back!

He starts to stalk out.

FIGARO, *stopping him*. You're not going without giving the word about my wedding?

Enter BASIL, BARTHOLO, MARCELINE, and SUNSTRUCK.

MARCELINE, to the COUNT. Don't give the word, my lord. Before you do him a favor, you must do me justice. He has obligations toward me.

COUNT, *aside*. My revenge at last!

FIGARO. Obligations? Of what sort? Please explain.

MARCELINE. Of course I shall explain, false knave!

COUNTESS *sits in an armchair*, SUZANNE *behind her*.

COUNT. What is it you are referring to, Marceline?

MARCELINE. A promise of marriage.

FIGARO. A promissory note for money I borrowed, nothing more.

MARCELINE, to COUNT. But with the forfeit of marrying me.

You are a great lord, the highest judge in the province . . .

COUNT. Come to the assizes. I will give everybody justice.

BASIL, *pointing to* MARCELINE. In that case, your worship will permit me to put in evidence my claims on Marceline?

COUNT, *aside*. This is the scoundrel of the anonymous note.

FIGARO. As mad as she is—birds of a feather!

COUNT, to BASIL, *angrily*. Your claims, your claims! What right have you to speak up in my presence, master fool?

ANTONIO, *striking his fist into the palm of his other hand*. Got him the first time: it sure is his right name!

COUNT. Marceline, everything is recessed until the public hearing of your plea, which shall take place in the large reception room. You, wise Basil, as my faithful and reliable agent, shall go into town and summon the bench.

BASIL. For her case?

COUNT. And bring along the peasant who gave you the note.

BASIL. How should I know him?

COUNT. You object?

BASIL. I did not enter your service to run errands.

COUNT. What's that?

BASIL. A talented performer on the parish organ, I teach my lady the keyboard, coach her women in singing and your pages on the mandolin. But my chief employment is to entertain your company on the guitar, when it pleases you to command me.

SUNSTRUCK, *coming forward*. I'll go, your lordsy, if they's what you want.

COUNT. What is your name and your employment?

SUNSTRUCK. My name is Sunstruck, good lordsy. I watch the goats, and bin asked in for the fireworks. It's holiday today for all us herds. But I know where's the roaring big trial-shop in town.

COUNT. Your gumption pleases me, go do my errand. As for you . . .

To BASIL

. . . go along with this gentleman, singing and playing the guitar to entertain him on the way, for he is of my company.

SUNSTRUCK, *elated*. I—I'm of the—

SUZANNE *calms him down by pointing to the* COUNTESS.

BASIL, *taken aback*. Go along with Sunstruck while playing the guitar?

COUNT. It is your profession: off you go, or you're dismissed.
Exit.

BASIL, *to himself*. I'm certainly not going to fight the iron pot, I who am—

FIGARO. —already cracked.

BASIL, *aside*. Instead of furthering their wedding, I am going to insure Marceline's and mine.

To FIGARO.

Don't sign anything, I warn you, until I come back.

He picks up his guitar from a chair at the back.

FIGARO, *following him*. Sign anything? Don't worry! I shan't, even if you never come back. But you don't seem in the mood for song. Would you like me to begin? Come on, a smile, and the high *la-mi-la* for my bride.

He walks backward and dances the following seguidilla.

BASIL *accompanies him and everyone joins in.*

ALL, *together*.

*Better than riches, I love
The goodness of
My Suzanne,
Zann, zann, zann,
Zann, zann, zann,
Zann, zann, zann*

*Always on her I'll depend
And madly end
As I began
Gan, gan, gan,
Gan, gan, gan,
Gan, gan, gan.*

Exeunt singing and dancing.

COUNTESS, *in the wing chair*. You see, Suzanne, the ordeal I had to go through, thanks to your wild friend's anonymous note?

SUZANNE. Oh, madam, if you could have seen your face when I came out of the dressing room—you lost all your color, but only for an instant, then you grew red—oh so red!

COUNTESS. And he jumped out of the window?

SUZANNE. Without a moment's hesitation, the dear child—light as a bird.

COUNTESS. That deplorable gardener! The whole thing made me so dizzy I couldn't keep two ideas together in my mind.

SUZANNE. Not at all, my lady, on the contrary. I saw at once what facility the habit of high society confers on respectable ladies who have to tell lies.

COUNTESS. Do you think the Count was taken in? What if he finds the poor child in the castle?

SUZANNE. I'm going to make sure he is well hidden.

COUNTESS. He must go away. After what happened, you can imagine I'm not tempted to send him into the garden dressed like you.

SUZANNE. And I shan't go either, so once again my wedding is—

COUNTESS. Wait! What if in your place, or another's—why shouldn't I go?

SUZANNE. You, madam?

COUNTESS. No one could be reprimanded—and the Count couldn't explain the facts away. First to have punished his jealousy, and then to demonstrate his infidelity—it would be . . . ! Come, our luck in the first adventure encourages me to try a second. Let him know quickly that you will go into the garden. But be sure no one knows—

SUZANNE. Not Figaro?

COUNTESS. No, no. He would want to contribute ideas . . . Fetch me my stick and my velvet mask. I'll go out on the terrace and daydream.

SUZANNE *goes into the dressing room.*

COUNTESS. My scheme is surely brash enough.

She turns around.

Ah, my ribbon, my pretty ribbon, I had forgotten you.

She takes it, sits, and rolls it up.

Henceforth you will be with me always, you will remind me of the scene in which that poor boy . . . Oh, Count, what have you done! And what am I doing right now?

SUZANNE *re-enters*; the COUNTESS *furtively slips the ribbon into her bosom.*

SUZANNE. Here is the stick and your mask.

COUNTESS. Remember, I forbid you to say one word to Figaro.

SUZANNE, *joyful*. Your plan is delightful, my lady. I've been thinking about it. It brings everything together, concludes everything, embraces everything. Whatever comes of it, my marriage is now assured.

She kisses the COUNTESS's hand. Exeunt.

During the intermission, the courtroom is prepared. Two settees are brought in for counsel, one on each side of the stage, but allowing free passage behind. In the center, toward the back, a raised platform with two steps, on which is put the COUNT's chair of state. The CLERK's table and his stool are to one side downstage; seats for BRIDLEGOOSE and the other judges are placed alongside the COUNT's platform.

ACT III

A room in the castle, known as the throne room and used as a reception room. To one side a canopy over a monumental chair, and on the wall, a portrait of the King. The COUNT with PETER, who is wearing coat and boots and is holding a sealed package.

COUNT, *speaking fast*. It's clearly understood?

PETER. Yes, Your Excellency.

Exit.

COUNT, *shouting*. Peter!

PETER, *returning*. Excellency?

COUNT. No one saw you?

PETER. Not a soul.

COUNT. Take the arab.

PETER. He's at the garden gate saddled and ready.

COUNT. Straight to Seville without a stop.

PETER. It's only ten miles and a fair road.

COUNT. As soon as you arrive, find out if the page is there.

PETER. At the house?

COUNT. Yes, and how long he's been there.

PETER. I understand.

COUNT. Give him his commission and come back as fast as you can.

PETER. What if he isn't there?

COUNT. Come back even faster. Tell me at once. Quick, be off!
(*Exit PETER.*)

COUNT, *pacing and meditating*. It was clumsy of me to send Basil away . . . Anger is a bad counselor . . . That note he gave me telling of an attempt to approach the Countess . . . The chambermaid locked in that room when I came back

. . . Her mistress making believe she was a prey to terror, or really terrified . . . A man jumps out of the window and the other, later, owns up to it, or pretends it was he. There is a link missing. Something devious is going on. A certain license among my vassals—what can it matter? But the Countess, if some upstart dared! . . . My mind wanders. Truly, when anger rules, the most controlled imagination runs wild, as in a dream. She was laughing—I heard her smothered giggles, their ill-concealed amusement. But she has self-respect . . . and my honor—in whose keeping is it? As to the other affair, where do I stand? Did that rascally Suzanne give me away? . . . seeing it isn't her secret yet. Why am I so bent on having her? A dozen times, I've thought of giving her up. The results of indecision are certainly strange: if I wanted her without hesitation, I shouldn't feel nearly so much desire. Figaro is behind time as usual: I must deftly plumb his thoughts.

FIGARO enters upstage and stops.

At any rate I must find out from his replies to what I shall put to him casually whether or not he knows I'm in love with Suzanne.

FIGARO, *aside*. Here it comes.

COUNT. That is, if she has dropped a hint.

FIGARO, *aside*. I guessed it, I guess.

COUNT. Next, I marry him off to the old girl . . .

FIGARO, *aside*. Mister Basil's beloved?

COUNT. And then see what I can do with the young one.

FIGARO, *aside*. With my wife, if you please.

COUNT, *turning around*. Eh, what? Who is it?

FIGARO. Me, at your service.

COUNT. What were you saying?

FIGARO. I haven't breathed a word.

COUNT. "My wife, if you please."

FIGARO. Oh, that! —That is the conclusion of a reply I was making: "Go and tell my wife, if you please."

COUNT, *pacing*. His wife! I am curious to know what business can detain your lordship when I have you called.

FIGARO, *pretending to adjust his clothing*. I'd got dirty falling on that flower bed, so I changed.

COUNT. Does it take an hour?

FIGARO. It takes the time it takes.

COUNT. The servants here need longer to dress than the masters.

FIGARO. That's because they have no valets to help them.

COUNT. I didn't quite understand what compelled you a moment ago to risk your life for nothing by jumping—

FIGARO. Risk my life! One would suppose I had leaped into a bottomless pit!

COUNT. Don't try to put me off the point by pretending you missed it yourself, you devious lackey. You understand very well that it isn't the danger to your life that concerns me, but your motive.

FIGARO. On the strength of a false alarm you come rushing in furiously, overturning everything like a mountain torrent. You're looking for a man: you have to find one or you will break down the doors and splinter the walls! I happen to be in your way—how am I to know that in your wrath—

COUNT. You could have escaped by the stairs—

FIGARO. And you'd catch me in the hall.

COUNT, *angry*. In the hall!

Aside.

I'm getting the worst of it and no nearer finding out what I am after.

FIGARO, *aside*. Let us see his game and match him trick for trick.

COUNT, *softening his tone*. That isn't what I wanted to tell you. Let's drop the subject. I thought—as a matter of fact, I did think of taking you with me to London, as King's Messenger, but on second thoughts—

FIGARO. Your lordship has changed his mind?

COUNT. In the first place you don't know English.

FIGARO. I know "God damn!"

COUNT. I don't follow you.

FIGARO. I say that I know "God damn!"

you? manner of tally to Count

COUNT. What about it?

FIGARO. I mean, English is a wonderful language—it takes but a few words to cover a lot of ground. With “God damn,” in English, a man need lack for nothing. Do you want to ~~sink your teeth into a nice juicy fowl?~~ Go into a tavern and make this gesture (*Turning a spit.*) and say “God damn!” The waiter brings you a joint of salt beef with no bread—it’s marvelous! Do you want a good glass of burgundy or claret—just do this (*Drawing a cork.*) “God damn!” and they bring you a foaming tankard of beer—it’s perfectly wonderful! Should you meet one of those attractive ladies who go trotting about with their elbows pulled back and their hips swinging a bit, just put your four fingers delicately on your lips—“God damn!”—and you get slapped as by a stevedore. That proves they get your meaning. The English people, it is true, use a word or two more, here and there in conversation, but it is clear that “God damn” is the core of the language—so if your only reason for leaving me behind in Spain is—

COUNT, *aside*. He wants to go to London: she hasn’t told him.

FIGARO, *aside*. He thinks I know nothing. Let’s encourage his delusion.

COUNT. What motive did the Countess have for playing that trick on me?

FIGARO. Really, my lord, you know the reason better than I.

COUNT. I anticipate all her wishes and smother her with gifts.

FIGARO. You give but you aren’t faithful: would anyone be grateful for luxuries who is starved of necessities?

COUNT. You used to tell me everything.

FIGARO. And now I keep nothing from you.

COUNT. How much did the Countess give you for being in league with her?

FIGARO. How much did you give me to extricate her from Bartholo’s hands? Look here, my lord, it’s best not to humiliate a man who serves you well, for fear he may turn into a nasty underling.

* The implied answer is: “Nothing.” The allusion is to the plot for freeing Rosine in *The Barber of Seville*.

COUNT. Why is there something shady about everything you do?

FIGARO. Things always look bad when someone is bent on finding fault.

COUNT. You have a hateful reputation!

FIGARO. Maybe it’s undeserved: how many noblemen can say as much?

COUNT. Time and again I’ve seen you on the path to fame and fortune—you always go astray.

FIGARO. What do you expect? The mob is all around, pushing, struggling, crowding, using their elbows, knocking you down. Survives who can; the rest are crushed. And so my mind’s made up: I’m through.

COUNT. Through with success?

Aside.

That’s news.

FIGARO, *aside*. My turn now.

Aloud.

Your Excellency favored me with the stewardship of the castle: my lot is a happy one. True, I shan’t be King’s Messenger and be the first to hear interesting news; but by way of compensation, I’ll enjoy wedded bliss here in the heart of Andalusia.

COUNT. Why not take your wife to London?

FIGARO. I’d have to leave her so often I’d soon find marriage a bore.

COUNT. With your brains and character, you could make your way in the administration.

FIGARO. Make your way with brains? You must think mine are added: be dull and obsequious if you want to succeed.

COUNT. All you’d have to do is to learn statecraft under me.

FIGARO. I know all about it.

COUNT. As you do English—the basic tongue!

FIGARO. Yes—and it’s nothing to boast about. Only pretend not to know what you do know and vice versa; understand what’s unintelligible and fail to take in what is clear; above

“Statecraft”

all, put forth more strength than you possess; make a secret, often, of what no one is hiding; shut yourself up and trim goose quills so as to seem deep when you are only, as they say, a stuffed shirt; play a part well or ill, send out spies and hire informers, tamper with seals and intercept letters, and try to make ignoble tricks look noble in the light of important ends—that's all of statecraft or God strike me dead!

COUNT. But that's mere intrigue you're describing.

FIGARO. Statecraft, intrigue—as you like. To me, they're kith and kin, and the world is welcome to them. "I'd rather have my own best girl," as the man told the king in the ballad.*

COUNT, *aside*. He wants to stay. I see. . . . Suzanne gave me away.

FIGARO, *aside*. I've scored and paid him back in his own coin.

COUNT. And so you hope to win your case against Marceline?

FIGARO. Do you impute it to me as a crime that I refuse an old maid when Your Excellency feels free to snatch all the young ones?

COUNT, *bantering*. On the bench the judge will put self aside and heed nothing but the law.

FIGARO. The law! Lenient to the great, harsh to the humble.

COUNT. Do you think I am joking?

FIGARO. Who knows, my lord? But "*Tempo è galant 'uomo*," as the Italian proverb says. Time always tells the truth—that's how I'll learn what good or ill is to befall me.

COUNT, *aside*. I can see she's told him everything; he's got to marry the duenna.

FIGARO, *aside*. He thinks he has me fooled. Actually, what has he found out?

FOOTMAN, *announcing*. Don Guzman Bridlegoose.†

COUNT. Bridlegoose?

* *J'aime mieux ma mie, o gué*, a song of the time of Henry IV which is quoted in Molière's *Misanthrope*.

† The don's first name is an allusion to the judge whom Beaumarchais fought and satirized in the course of his protracted lawsuit. Bridlegoose is from Rabelais, though Beaumarchais modestly changed the name to "Bridlegosling" to suggest his descent. >

FIGARO. Of course, the associate justice, your understudy and right-hand man.

COUNT. Let him wait.

Exit FOOTMAN.

FIGARO, *waiting a moment longer while the COUNT is abstracted*. What else did your lordship require?

COUNT, *wide awake*. I? I was saying this room should be prepared for the public hearing.

FIGARO. It's all set: the big chair for you, pretty good chairs for the justices, the clerk's stool, benches for the lawyers, the foreground for the quality and the rest of the floor for the groundlings. I shall dismiss the cleaning women.

Exit.

COUNT, *to himself*. That upstart is becoming a nuisance. When he argues he gets the best of me. He presses in and corners you. Oh, fox and vixen! You have combined to take me in. Well, be friends, be lovers, be what you will—I don't care. But when it comes to marrying—

SUZANNE, *breathless*. My lord, forgive me, my lord.

COUNT, *crossly*. What is it, miss?

SUZANNE. You are angry?

COUNT. I take it there is something you want?

SUZANNE, *shyly*. It's because my lady has the vapors. I ran to ask you to lend us your bottle of ether. I'll bring it back immediately.

COUNT, *giving it to her*. Never mind. Keep it for yourself; you'll soon need it.

SUZANNE. Do women of my sort have vapors too? Isn't it a class disease, which is caught only in boudoirs?

COUNT. Well, a girl who is in love and engaged and who loses her intended—

SUZANNE. But if he pays Marceline out of the dowry you promised me—

COUNT. I promised you?

SUZANNE, *lowering her eyes*. Sir, I believe I heard you say so.

COUNT. You did, but only if on your side you were willing to listen to me.

SUZANNE, *eyes still lowered*. Isn't it my duty to listen to you?

COUNT. Then, cruel girl, why didn't you tell me sooner?

SUZANNE. It's never too late to tell the truth.

COUNT. You'll come into the garden tonight?

SUZANNE. As if I didn't go walking there every evening.

COUNT. This morning you behaved very harshly to me.

SUZANNE. This morning, yes, with the page behind the arm-chair.

COUNT. You are right. I forgot. But why your stubbornness before, when Basil spoke to you on my behalf?

SUZANNE. Why should someone like Basil—

COUNT. You are *always* right. Still, there is a certain Figaro to whom I think you have told everything.

SUZANNE. To be sure: I tell him everything . . . except what need never be told.

COUNT, *laughing*. You darling! You promise, then? If you break your word—let's be clear about it, sweetheart—no dowry, no marriage.

SUZANNE, *curtsying*. By the same token, my lord, no marriage, no right of the lord of the manor.

COUNT. Where does she learn this repartee? I swear, I'm crazy about her—but your mistress is waiting for the ether.

SUZANNE, *laughing and giving back the bottle*. How could I have talked to you without a pretext?

COUNT, *trying to kiss her*. Lovely creature!

SUZANNE, *starts to run off*. People are coming.

COUNT, *aside*. She is mine!

He runs off.

SUZANNE. Quick, now, to report to my lady.

FIGARO, *entering from upstage right*. Suzanne, Suzanne, where are you off to in such a hurry after leaving my lord?

SUZANNE. You can go to court now, you've just won your suit.

Running offstage.

FIGARO, *following*. See here—

Exit.

COUNT, *returning*. "You've just won your suit!" So I was pitching headlong into a trap! O my dear damnable schemers, you will rue the day! . . . a sound, solid decision from the bench . . . of course, he might pay off the duenna . . . but what with? If he should pay. . . Ah, ah, I have the proud Antonio, whose worthy ambition looks down on Figaro as rootless and unworthy of his niece. By nursing this *idée fixe*—and why not? In the field of intrigue one must cultivate everything, even the vanity of fools.

He starts to call.

Anto—

He sees MARCELINE and OTHERS, exit.

Enter MARCELINE, BARTHOLO, and BRIDLEGOOSE.

MARCELINE, *to BRIDLEGOOSE*. Sir, pray listen to my case.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *gowned and stammering slightly*. Very well, let us s-s-speak of it verbally.

BARTHOLO. It's a promise of marriage—

MARCELINE. Linked with a loan of money.

BRIDLEGOOSE. I und-derstand, et cetera and the rest.

MARCELINE. No, sir, no et cetera.

BRIDLEGOOSE. I und-derstand: you have the money?

MARCELINE. No, sir, it was I who lent it.

BRIDLEGOOSE. I quite und-derstand: you want the money back.

MARCELINE. No, sir, I want him to marry me.

BRIDLEGOOSE. I told you I und-derstood. But he—does he want to m-marry you?

MARCELINE. No, sir, that is the point of the case.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Do you mean to imply that I do not und-derstand the case?

MARCELINE. No, sir.

To BARTHOLO.

What a spot we're in!

To BRIDLEGOOSE.

You say you are going to decide the case?

BRIDLEGOOSE. Why else would I have bought my j-judge-ship?

MARCELINE, *sighing*. It seems to me a great wrong to sell them.

BRIDLEGOOSE. True, it would be better to g-give them to us for n-nothing. Whom are you suing?

Enter FIGARO, rubbing his hands.

MARCELINE, *pointing*. That unscrupulous man!

FIGARO, *cheerfully, to MARCELINE*. Perhaps I'm in your way? My lord will be back in a moment, Your Worship.

BRIDLEGOOSE. I've seen that fellow somewhere.

FIGARO. In the house of your lady wife, at Seville, and in her service, counselor.

BRIDLEGOOSE. In what year?

FIGARO. A little less than a year before the birth of your younger son, who is a very pretty child if I do say so myself.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Yes, he is the b-best-looking of them all. They tell me here that you are up to your old tricks.

FIGARO. You flatter *mé*, sir. It's only a trifle.

BRIDLEGOOSE. A promise of marriage! What a booby it is!

FIGARO. Sir!

BRIDLEGOOSE. Have you seen my secretary, a very nice chap?

FIGARO. You mean Doublefist, the clerk?

BRIDLEGOOSE. Yes, I do. He feeds in two places, too.

FIGARO. Feeds! I'll swear he wolfs. Yes indeed, I saw him about the writ, and then again about the supplement to the writ, as is customary.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Forms must be observed.

FIGARO. Unquestionably. Just as the cause of the suit belongs to the parties, so the forms are the property of the court.

BRIDLEGOOSE. The lad is not so stupid as I thought at first. Well, friend, since you know so much, we'll t-take care of you in court.

FIGARO. Sir, I rely on your sense of equity even though you are one of our justices.

BRIDLEGOOSE. What? . . . It's true I am a j-justice. But what if you owe and don't pay?

FIGARO. Surely you can see it comes out exactly as if I didn't owe.

BRIDLEGOOSE. No d-doubt . . . what? What? What did he say?

Enter the COUNT and a BEADLE, who walks ahead of him shouting for silence.

COUNT. Gown and bands in this place, Master Bridlegoose? For a hearing in camera, ordinary clothes are good enough.

BRIDLEGOOSE. 'Tis you are good enough, my lord. But I never go out ung-gowned, don't you see, it is a matter of f-form. A man will laugh at a judge in a short coat but tremble at the sight of an attorney in a g-gown, thanks to the f-form, the f-form.

COUNT. Let the court convene.

BEADLE, *croaking as he opens the doors*. The court! the court!

Enter ANTONIO, the COUNT's servants and his tenants, men and women, who are dressed for the wedding. The COUNT sits in the big chair, BRIDLEGOOSE to one side, the clerk DOUBLEFIST on his stool. The justices and counsel on the benches, MARCELINE next to BARTHOLO, FIGARO on another bench, the servants and tenants behind them.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *to DOUBLEFIST*. Doublefist, call up the cases.

DOUBLEFIST, *reading from a paper*. The noble, high, and puissant Don Pedro George, Hidalgo and Baron de los Altos y Montes Fieros y otros montes v. Alonzo Calderón, a young playwright, in the matter of a stillborn play, which each disowns and attributes to the other.

COUNT. They are both right. With a view to insuring public attention if they write another work together, it is ordered that the nobleman shall contribute his name and the poet his talent. Case dismissed.

DOUBLEFIST, *from another paper*. Andrea Petrucchio, farmer, v. the tax collector, in the matter of an arbitrary foreclosure.

COUNT. Not within my jurisdiction. I shall serve my vassals best by sponsoring them at the King's court. Next.

copy here for record?

DOUBLEFIST, *reading a third paper*. BARTHOLO and FIGARO rise. Barbara Hagar Rahab Magdelene Nicola Marceline Greenleaf, spinster of age . . .

MARCELINE rises and bows.

. . . v. Figaro, first name missing—

FIGARO. Anonymous.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Anonymous? What patron s-saint is that?

FIGARO. Mine.

DOUBLEFIST, *writing*. . . . versus "Anonymous Figaro." Profession?

FIGARO. Gentleman.

COUNT. You, a gentleman?

DOUBLEFIST is still writing.

FIGARO. God willing, I should have been the son of a prince.

COUNT, to DOUBLEFIST. Go on.

BEADLE, *croaking*. Silence in court!

DOUBLEFIST, *reading*. . . . in the matter of a dispute about the marriage of the said Figaro to the said Greenleaf, the learned Dr. Bartholo appearing for the plaintiff and the said Figaro for himself—provided the court allows it against the tenor of custom and the rules of the bench.

FIGARO. Custom, Mister Doublefist, is often mere corruption. A party to a suit always knows his case better than some barrister who sweats without conviction and shouts his head off about everything he knows, except the facts, and who does not mind ruining the suitor, boring the court, and putting the jury to sleep. And afterward he is as puffed up as if he had written Cicero's orations. I can put my case in two words. Gentlemen—

DOUBLEFIST. Those you've uttered so far are wasted, for you are not the plaintiff. You can only defend. Come forward, Doctor, and read into the evidence the promise of marriage.

FIGARO. Yes, the promise.

BARTHOLO, *putting on his glasses*. It is explicit.

BRIDLEGOOSE. We have to see.

DOUBLEFIST. Gentlemen, please be quiet.

BEADLE, *croaking*. Silence in court!

BARTHOLO. "I, the undersigned, acknowledge having received from the Damozel, et cetera, Marceline Greenleaf, of the manor of Aguas-Frescas, the sum of two thousand piastres, which sum I shall repay on her demand and in the said manor,—er—and shall marry her as a token of gratitude, et cetera, signed: Figaro—er—just Figaro." My client asks for the payment of the note and the execution of the promise, with costs.

Pleading.

Gentlemen! Never was a more moving request brought to the bar of a court. Since the case of Alexander the Great, who promised marriage to the beautiful Thalestris—

COUNT, *interrupting*. Before you go farther, counsel, is the genuineness of the document stipulated?

BRIDLEGOOSE, to FIGARO. What do you say to the f-f-facts just read into the evidence?

FIGARO. I say there is malice, error, or inadvertence in the manner in which the document was read. For the statement does not say: "Which sum I shall repay *and* I shall marry her"; it says: "Which sum I shall repay *or* I shall marry her," which is very different.

COUNT. Does the document say *and* or does it say *or*?

BARTHOLO. It says *and*.

FIGARO. It says *or*.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Doublefist, you read it.

DOUBLEFIST, *taking the paper*. That's always wise, because the parties twist things as they read. Er—er—er— "Damozel—er—Greenleaf—er— Ha! Which sum I shall repay on her demand, and in the said manor,—er—shall marry—and . . . or . . ." there's *and* after demand and *or* at the end of manor, but after that it's hard to make out—there is a blot.

BRIDLEGOOSE. A b-blot? Ah, I und-derstand!

BARTHOLO, *pleading again*. I submit, my lord and gentlemen, that the decisive word is the copulative conjunction *and* which links the correlative members of the sentence: "I shall pay the Damozel, et cetera, *and* I shall marry her."

FIGARO, *in the same tone*. And I maintain that it is the alternative conjunction *or*, which separates the said members: "I shall pay the damsel *or* I shall marry her." To his pedantry I oppose my superpedantry: if he drops into Latin, I come up with Greek and exterminate him.

COUNT. How am I to adjudicate such a question?

BARTHOLO. To settle it and no longer quibble over a syllable, we stipulate the absence of the second *and* after *manor*.

FIGARO. I ask for an affidavit to that effect.

BARTHOLO. We stand by our stipulation. But it affords no escape for the guilty, for let us examine the document with the stipulation in mind: "Which sum I shall repay on demand and in the said manor shall marry her . . ." It is as if one said: "I shall have myself bled in this room—and in this bed will remain until I feel better." Or again: "He will take a dose of calomel tonight—and in the morning will experience the good effect." Thus, my lord and gentlemen, "he will repay on demand—and in the said manor will marry. . . ."

FIGARO. Nothing of the kind! There is a word under the blot and it is *or*, as thus: "Either illness carries you off, *or* your physician will see to it." That is irrefutable. Another example: "Either you write wretched stuff, *or* all the fools will mark you down." Does Dr. Bartholo think that I have forgotten my grammar? "I shall repay, on her demand and in the said manor *COMMA* *or* I shall marry her."

BARTHOLO, *quickly*. There's no comma.

FIGARO, *just as quickly*. There is. It goes: "COMMA, *or* I shall marry her."

BARTHOLO, *glancing at the paper*. It's without a comma.

FIGARO. It was there, my lord and gentlemen, before the blot. Besides, does a man who marries have to pay the debt as well?

BARTHOLO, *instantly*. Yes, because we marry under a separate property agreement.

FIGARO, *just as fast*. If marriage does not cancel the debt, we insist on the separation of persons *and* property!

The judges rise and confer.

BARTHOLO. A rewarding cancellation!

DOUBLEFIST. Silence, gentlemen!

BEADLE, *croaking*. Silence in court!

BARTHOLO. Scoundrels of this stripe call it paying their debts!

FIGARO. Are you speaking now on your own behalf?

BARTHOLO. I am defending this lady.

FIGARO. You may go on raving, but please stop casting aspersions. When the law, fearing the passions of the interested parties, allowed the intervention of counsel, it did not mean to permit these temperate defenders to become privileged slanderers. That would have been to degrade the noblest of institutions.

The judges are still conferring.

ANTONIO, *to MARCELINE, and pointing to the judges*. Why must they palaverate so long?

MARCELINE. They got at the chief justice, he is getting around the other one, and I am about to lose the case.

BARTHOLO, *somberly*. I am afraid so.

FIGARO, *gaily*. Cheer up, Marceline!

DOUBLEFIST, *jumping up and addressing MARCELINE*. That's too much! I denounce you, and for the honor of the court I ask that before the other case is settled you be tried for contempt!

COUNT, *sitting down*. No, master clerk. I shall not judge in my own case for an insult to my person. No Spanish judge will have to blush for such an abuse of power, worthy only of an oriental despot. We commit enough wrongs as it is. I am now going to correct one of these by stating the reasons for my decision. Any judge who rules and gives no reason is an enemy of the law. What does the plaintiff ask? Marriage failing payment. Both together would be contradictory.

DOUBLEFIST. Silence, gentlemen!

BEADLE, *croaking*. Silence in court!

COUNT. What does the defendant rejoin? That he wants to retain possession of his person. Permission is granted.

FIGARO. I've won!

COUNT. But since the text says: Which sum I shall repay on the first demand or I shall marry, etc., the court orders the defendant to pay the plaintiff two thousand piastres or to marry her within the day.

Rises.

FIGARO, *petrified*. I've lost!

ANTONIO, *delighted*. A magnificent decision!

FIGARO. How, magnificent?

ANTONIO. On account of how you aren't no longer my nephew-in-law, thank the Lord!

BEADLE, *croaking*. Move along, gem'mun.

Exeunt.

ANTONIO. I'm off to tell all about it to my niece.

MARCELINE, *sitting down*. Now I can breathe freely.

FIGARO. But I am suffocating.

COUNT, *aside*. And I am avenged; it's very soothing.

FIGARO, *aside*. Where's Basil, who was supposed to prevent Marceline's marriage—he's back in good time, I don't think!

To the COUNT, on his way out.

Leaving us, my lord?

COUNT. There's nothing more to judge.

FIGARO, *looking at BRIDLEGOOSE*. If it weren't for that fathead—BRIDLEGOOSE. Me, a fathead?

FIGARO. Who can doubt it? And I shan't marry her: I am a gentleman after all.

The COUNT stops.

BARTHOLO. You will marry her.

FIGARO. Without my noble progenitors' consent?

BARTHOLO. Give us their name, exhibit them.

FIGARO. Give me a little time. I must be close to finding them, I've been looking for fifteen years.

BARTHOLO. Conceited ass! A foundling!

FIGARO. Not found, Doctor, lost, or rather, stolen.

COUNT, *returning*. Stolen, lost—where's the proof? Otherwise he'll cry out that he's being cheated.

FIGARO. My lord, even if the lace on my baby clothes, and the embroidered coverlet, and the gold and jewels I wore when the brigands snatched me, did not suffice to prove my high birth, the care that had been taken to put distinctive marks on me would show that I was a valuable offspring. I have hieroglyphics on my arm . . .

He starts to roll up his right sleeve.

MARCELINE, *rising quickly*. You have a mark like a spatula on your right arm?

FIGARO. How do you know I have?

MARCELINE. Good God, it's he!

FIGARO. Of course it's me.

BARTHOLO, *to MARCELINE*. Who?

MARCELINE, *quickly*. It's Emmanuel!

BARTHOLO, *to FIGARO*. You were kidnaped by gypsies?

FIGARO, *excited*. Near a castle, yes. My good Doctor, if you restore me to my noble family, set a high price on your services. Gold and treasure are trifles to my illustrious parents.

BARTHOLO, *pointing to MARCELINE*. There is your mother.

FIGARO. Foster mother?

BARTHOLO. Your own mother.

COUNT. His mother?

FIGARO. Explain.

MARCELINE, *pointing to BARTHOLO*. There is your father.

FIGARO, *in distress*. Ah, oh, woe is me!

MARCELINE. Didn't the voice of nature tell you so again and again?

FIGARO. Not once.

COUNT, *aside*. His mother!

BRIDLEGOOSE. One thing is c-c-clear: he won't marry her.*

COUNT. Stupid turn of events—most annoying!

* At this point occurs a declamatory passage of about two pages on society's unjust treatment of women. It was omitted in the original production and has not been played since, though Beaumarchais printed it in his Preface.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *to FIGARO*. And your nobility? Your castle? You would hoodwink the law with false pretenses?

FIGARO. The law! It nearly made me commit a prize blunder, the law did—on top of the fact that for those accursed hundred pounds,* many is the time I almost beat up this gentleman who turns out to be my father. But since heaven has saved my virtue from these temptations, Father of mine, please accept my apologies . . . And you, Mother mine, fold me in your arms—as maternally as you can.

MARCELINE *clasps him about the neck*.

SUZANNE, *running with a purse in her hand*. My lord, stop everything! Do not marry them: I've come to pay this lady with the dowry madam has given me.

COUNT, *aside*. The devil take the Countess! It is as if everything conspired . . .

Exit.

ANTONIO, *seeing FIGARO embracing his mother, addresses SUZANNE*. Payment, eh? I see, I see.

SUZANNE, *turning her back*. I've seen enough; let's go, Uncle.

FIGARO. Please don't! What is it you've seen enough?

SUZANNE. My weakness of mind and your lack of integrity—

FIGARO. Neither of them a fact.

SUZANNE, *angrily*. . . and your willingness to marry her and caress her.

FIGARO, *gaily*. I caress but don't marry.

SUZANNE *tries to leave; FIGARO prevents her; SUZANNE slaps him*.

SUZANNE. You are impertinent and rude, let me go!

FIGARO, *to the company*. That's love for you! Before you go, though, I beg you take a good look at the dear woman in front of you.

SUZANNE. I'm looking.

FIGARO. How does she strike you?

SUZANNE. Horrible!

* An allusion to Figaro's successful swindle of Bartholo in *The Barber of Seville*.

FIGARO. Long live jealousy! No half measures about it.

MARCELINE, *arms open to SUZANNE*. Come kiss your mother, my pretty Suzanette. The naughty boy who is tormenting you is my son.

SUZANNE, *running to her*. You—his mother!

They stay clasped in each other's arms.

ANTONIO. It must have just happened.

FIGARO. No, only just disclosed.

MARCELINE, *with fervor*. My heart was right to be so strongly drawn to him, though mistaking its reason. Blood was speaking to me.

FIGARO. And good sense to me, which worked like instinct to make me refuse you. For I was far from hating you, witness the money . . .

MARCELINE, *handing him a paper*. The money is yours: take back your note. It is your dowry.

SUZANNE, *throwing the purse to him*. And take this tool

FIGARO. Many thanks!

MARCELINE, *excited*. I was unfortunate as a girl, and, just now was about to become the most wretched of wives; I am now the happiest of mothers. Come kiss me, children: all my feelings of love are centered upon you. I am as happy as anyone can be and—oh, children, how I am going to love you!

FIGARO, *moved and speaking with vehemence*. Please stop, dearest Mother, or you will see my eyes dissolve away in the first tears I have ever shed. They are tears of joy—but what a fool I am: I nearly felt ashamed of myself as I felt the drops on my hands.

He shows his hands, fingers outspread.

I stupidly tried to hold them back. Away, false shame! I want to laugh and cry all at once. What I now feel does not come to a man twice in a lifetime.

He kisses his mother to one side of him, SUZANNE on the other.

MARCELINE. Oh, my dear!

SUZANNE. My very dear!

BRIDLEGOOSE, *wiping his eyes*. It seems I am a f-fool also!

FIGARO, *excited*. Grief! I can now defy you: afflict me if you can, between these two women I love.

ANTONIO, *to FIGARO*. Not so many pretty speeches, if you please. Apropos of marriage, in good families, that of the parents is supposed to precede. Do your parents ask each other's hand?

BARTHOLO. May my hand rot and fall off if I ever offer it to the mother of such a character!

ANTONIO, *to BARTHOLO*. In other words you're nothing but an unnatural father?

To FIGARO.

In that case, Lothario, the bargain's off.

SUZANNE. Oh, Uncle!

ANTONIO. D'you think I'll give my sister's child to this here who's no one's child?

BRIDLEGOOSE. How do you make that out, idiot? Everyone is somebody's child!

ANTONIO. Yah, yah: he shan't have her nohow.

Exit.

BARTHOLO, *to FIGARO*. Better look for somebody to adopt you.

He tries to go, but MARCELINE seizes him around the middle and pulls him back.

MARCELINE. One moment, Doctor, don't go.

FIGARO, *aside*. It's incredible but all the fools in Andalusia are rabid against my poor desire to get married.

SUZANNE, *to BARTHOLO*. Dear little Father, he is your son.

MARCELINE. He has wit, talent, and presence.

FIGARO. And he never cost you a penny.

BARTHOLO. What about the hundred pounds he robbed me off?

MARCELINE, *cuddling him*. We'll take such good care of you, Papa!*

SUZANNE, *cuddling*. We'll love you so much, dear little Papa!

BARTHOLO, *yielding*. "Papa, Papa, dear Papa—" Now I'm going to be as big a fool as this gentleman . . .

* Accent on the second syllable, as in Mamma later.

Pointing to BRIDLEGOOSE.

I'm being led like a child.

MARCELINE *and SUZANNE kiss him.*

Now, now, I haven't said yes.

Turning around.

What's become of his lordship?

FIGARO. Let's join him, quick, and force a decision from him.

If he were to think up some new scheme, we'd have to start all over again.

ALL, *together*. Let's go, let's go!

They drag BARTHOLO outside.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *left alone*. "As big a fool as this gentleman." A man can say that sort of thing about himself, but . . . they're not at all p-polite in this p-place.

Exit.

ACT IV

A large room with candelabra all lighted, floral decorations, and other ornaments indicative of preparations for a party. Downstage right stands a table and on it a writing case. Behind the table is an armchair.

FIGARO, *hugging* SUZANNE. Well, love, are you happy? She got round the doctor, didn't she, my silver-tongued mother? Despite his distaste he is marrying her, and your curmudgeon of an uncle can't help himself. That leaves only my lord in a rage; for after all, our marriage is the upshot of theirs. What a happy ending! Aren't you inclined to laugh?

SUZANNE. I never knew anything so odd.

FIGARO. Say rather so jolly. All we wanted was a dowry, squeezed out of His Excellency. Now we have two which owe nothing to him. A relentless rival was hounding you and I was bedeviled by a fury. That trouble has for us both taken the form of a loving mother. Yesterday I was, so to speak, alone in the world; today I have all my relatives complete about me. True, they're not so resplendent as if I had designed them myself, but good enough for us who haven't the ambition to be rich.

SUZANNE. And yet none of the things that you had planned and expected came through.

FIGARO. Chance did a better job, my sweet. That's the way of the world. You toil, you scheme, you make projects, all in your own corner; Fortune works in another. From the insatiable conqueror who would like to swallow the globe to the peaceable blind man led by his dog, all human beings are the playthings of fate. Indeed, the blind man is often better served by his dog, less deceived in his opinions, than some other self-blinded man with his retinue. As for that delightful blind fellow called Love . . .

ACT IV

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He again embraces her tenderly.

SUZANNE. He's the only one I care about.

FIGARO. Well then, let me be the serviceable dog in folly's employ, who makes it his job to lead him to your charming little door. And there we'll be cozy for the rest of our lives.

SUZANNE, *laughing*. Love and you?

FIGARO. I and Love.

SUZANNE. And you won't look for other lodgings?

FIGARO. If you catch me at it, I'm willing to have a hundred million philanderers—

SUZANNE. You're going to say more than you mean: tell me the honest truth.

FIGARO. My truest truth?

SUZANNE. Shame on you, rascal! Is there more than one?

FIGARO. I should say so! Ever since it has been observed that with the passage of time old follies turn into wisdom, and that early little lies, even though poorly planted, bloom into great big truths—ever since then, there have been endless species of truths. There are those one dare not utter, for not every truth is fit to say; there are those one flaunts without putting faith in them, for not every truth is fit to believe. And then there are the passionate promises, the parental threats, the resolutions of drinkers, the assurances of office holders, the "positively final offers" of businessmen—there's no end to them. Only my love for my Suzy is true coin.

SUZANNE. I love your gaiety because it is wild. It shows you are happy. But let's talk about meeting the Count in the garden.

FIGARO. Far better never speak of that again. It nearly cost me my Sue.

SUZANNE. You don't want me to go through with it?

FIGARO. If you love me, Suzy, give me your word on this. Let him eat his heart out—it'll be his punishment.

SUZANNE. I found it harder at first to agree to it than now to give it up—I'll never mention it again.

FIGARO. That's your truest truth?

SUZANNE. I'm not like you learned people. I have only one truth.

FIGARO. And you'll love me a little?

SUZANNE. Much.

FIGARO. That isn't much.

SUZANNE. What do you mean?

FIGARO. Why, in love, don't you see, too much is barely enough.

SUZANNE. Your subtleties are beyond me, but I intend to love only my husband.

FIGARO. Stick to it and you will represent a remarkable exception to the rule.

Starts to kiss her. Enter COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. I was just saying: wherever they happen to be, you may be sure they're together. I really think, Figaro, that each time you indulge in a tête-à-tête you are living off the future, drawing on wedded bliss, and robbing yourself. People look for you and get impatient.

FIGARO. You are right, madam. I was forgetting myself. I will show them my excuse.

He tries to take SUZANNE with him.

COUNTESS, *holding her back*. She'll follow later.

Exit FIGARO.

To SUZANNE.

Have you what's needed to change clothes with me?

SUZANNE. Nothing is needed, madam. The assignation is off.

COUNTESS. You have changed your mind?

SUZANNE. It's Figaro—

COUNTESS. You are deceiving me.

SUZANNE. God is my witness!

COUNTESS. Figaro is not a man to let a dowry slip from his grasp.

SUZANNE. Oh, madam, what can you be thinking?

COUNTESS. Why, that in concert with the Count, you are now sorry you made me privy to his plans. I can read you like a book. Leave me to myself.

She starts to leave.

SUZANNE, *on her knees*. In the name of heaven which is our hope, you cannot know the wrong you do me. When you have been so endlessly good to me, after the dowry you've given me, how could I—

COUNTESS, *lifting her up*. But—of course! I must have been out of my mind. Since you are changing places with me, dear heart, you won't be going into the garden. You'll be keeping your word to your husband and helping me recapture mine.

SUZANNE. Oh, how you upset me!

COUNTESS. I've been terribly scatterbrained.

Kisses SUZANNE on the forehead.

Where is the meeting place?

SUZANNE *kisses the COUNTESS's hand*. All I heard was "garden."

COUNTESS, *motioning SUZANNE to the table*. Take that pen and we will name a spot.

SUZANNE. I, write to him?

COUNTESS. You must.

SUZANNE. But at least, madam, you—

COUNTESS. I'll take the responsibility for everything.

SUZANNE sits at the table.

COUNTESS, *dictating*. "A new song to the tune of: 'How lovely under the elms at night, How lovely . . .'"

SUZANNE, *writing*. "' . . . under the elms.'" Yes, nothing else?

COUNTESS. Have you the slightest fear that he won't understand?

SUZANNE. You're right.

She folds the note.

What sort of seal?

COUNTESS. A pin, quick—it will serve to reply with. Write on the back: "Please return the seal."

SUZANNE, *laughing*. Ho! the seal! This seal, my lady, is a funnier joke than the one on the officer's commission.

COUNTESS, *in painful recollection*. Oh!

SUZANNE, *looking on her person*. I haven't a pin on me.

COUNTESS, *unpinning her coat collar*. Take this.

The PAGE's ribbon falls from her bosom.

Oh, my ribbon!

SUZANNE, *picking it up*. Ah, the little thief's property . . . and you were cruel enough to—

COUNTESS. Could I let him wear it on his arm? A fine spectacle! Give it back to me.

SUZANNE. Your ladyship cannot wear it: it is spotted with the young man's blood.

COUNTESS. It will be just right for Fanchette . . . when she next brings me flowers.

Enter a young shepherdess, CHERUBINO dressed as a girl, FANCHETTE and other girls dressed like her and carrying bouquets.

FANCHETTE. My lady, these girls from the village bring you flowers.

COUNTESS *quickly hides the ribbon again*. They are delightful. It grieves me, dears, not to know you all by name.

Pointing to CHERUBINO.

But who is this lovely child who seems so shy?

SHEPHERDESS. A cousin of mine, ma'am, come to visit for the wedding.

COUNTESS. So pretty! Since I can't wear all twenty of your posies, I'll honor the stranger.

She takes CHERUBINO's bouquet and kisses him on the forehead.

She's blushing. Suzy, don't you think she looks like someone we know?

SUZANNE. So much so I can hardly tell them apart.

CHERUBINO, *aside, both hands on his heart*. Oh, that kiss went right through me!

ANTONIO, *entering with the COUNT*. And I tell you he's here somewhere. They dressed him at my daughter's, all the clothes are still around, and here's his regulation hat, which I picked out of the lot.

Steps forward, scans the girls' faces, and recognizes CHERUBINO, whose female bonnet he pulls off. As CHERUBINO's long hair falls in ringlets, ANTONIO tosses the military hat on top.

By gum, there's your officer!

COUNTESS, *stepping back*. Heavens!

SUZANNE. The rascalion!

ANTONIO. I was telling you upstairs it was him.

COUNT, *angry*. Well, madam?

COUNTESS. Well, sir, you find me as surprised as you and equally angry.

COUNT. It may be, but what about this morning?

COUNTESS. I should be guilty indeed if I kept up the deception any longer. He had dropped in to see me, and it was then we undertook the practical joke which these children have completed. You discovered Suzanne and me dressing him up. You are so quick to anger that he ran away, I lost my good judgment, and general dismay did the rest.

COUNT, *disgruntled*. Why haven't you left?

CHERUBINO, *flinging off the hat*. My lord—

COUNT. I shall punish you for disobeying.

FANCHETTE, *thoughtlessly*. Oh, my lord, please listen to me: every time you come by and kiss me you always say: "Fanchette, dear, if you will love me, I'll give you anything you want."

COUNT, *flushing*. I have said that?

FANCHETTE. Yes, my lord. Well, instead of punishing Cherubino, give him to me for a husband, and then I'll love you madly.

COUNT, *aside*. Diddled by a page!

COUNTESS. Count, it is your turn now. This child's naïve confession, as innocent as mine, bears witness to a double truth, which is that when I cause you anguish it is always unintentionally, whereas you do your utmost to increase and justify my own.

ANTONIO. You too, my lord? By gum, I'm going to get after that chit as I did after her mother, now gathered. . . . Not

that it's of consequence, but as my lady knows, these little girls when they grow up. . . .

COUNT, *discomfited, aside*. There is an evil genius in this place who turns everything against me.

FIGARO, *entering*. My lord, if you detain the young ladies, the party can't begin, or the dance either.

COUNT. You want to dance? Have you forgotten how you fell this morning and sprained your right foot?

FIGARO, *swinging his leg*. It's still a trifle sore, but it's nothing.
To the girls.

Come along, darlings, come.

COUNT, *turning FIGARO about*. You were lucky the flower bed was soft earth.

FIGARO. Very lucky—otherwise . . .

ANTONIO *twists* him the other way. Besides he "gathered himself together" as he fell all the way to the bottom.

FIGARO. A really clever man would have stopped halfway down.

To the girls.

Are you coming, ladies?

ANTONIO, *twisting FIGARO again*. All the while the little page was galloping on his horse toward Seville.

FIGARO. Galloping, or maybe sauntering . . .

COUNT *twists* FIGARO the other way. And his commission was in your pocket.

FIGARO, *somewhat surprised*. Undoubtedly, but why this examination?

To the girls.

Now come on, girls!

ANTONIO, *pulling CHERUBINO by the arm*. Here's one who says my future nephew is a liar.

FIGARO, *taken aback*. Cherubino!

Aside.

Blast the little braggart!

ANTONIO. Have you got it now?

FIGARO. Got it, got it! . . . By the by, what's his story?

COUNT, *dryly*. Hardly a story; he says it was he who jumped into the gillyflowers.

FIGARO, *abstracted*. Hm, if he says so . . . it may well be. I don't argue about what I don't know.

COUNT. So both you and he . . .

FIGARO. Why not? The jumping fever is catching—just think of sheep over a fence.* And when my lord is angry, anyone would prefer to risk his neck—

COUNT. Now really, two by two?

FIGARO. We'd have done it by the dozen—and why should you care, my lord, seeing no one was hurt?

To the girls.

I say, are you coming in or aren't you?

COUNT, *outraged*. Is it a farce we're playing together, you and I?

Music begins off stage.

FIGARO. There's the opening march. Fall in, my beauties, fall in. Here, Suzanne, give me your arm.

Exeunt except CHERUBINO, who stays behind, his head hung down.

COUNT, *gazing at FIGARO's back*. Did you ever see greater nerve?

To CHERUBINO.

As for you, sly boots who now pretend to be ashamed, go dress yourself properly and let me not see your face for the rest of the evening.

COUNTESS. He will be terribly bored.

CHERUBINO, *thoughtlessly*. Bored? I carry on my brow enough happiness to outweigh a hundred years in jail!

He puts on his hat and leaves. The COUNTESS fans herself violently.

COUNT. What is so happy about his brow?

* In the original Beaumarchais refers to the sheep in Rabelais which Panurge induced to jump overboard by throwing over the first one.

COUNTESS, *embarrassed*. His first military hat, I suppose. With children any novelty is like a toy.

She starts to leave.

COUNT. You won't stay, Countess?

COUNTESS. I told you I did not feel well.

COUNT. One moment more for the sake of your protégée—or I'll think you are cross.

COUNTESS. Here come the two wedding processions. Let us sit and receive them.

COUNT, *aside*. The wedding! . . . Well, what can't be cured must be endured.

COUNT and COUNTESS sit to one side of the room. Enter the processions to a march based on the Folies d'Espagne.*

A Gamekeeper, a musket on his shoulder.

The mayor, the aldermen, BRIDLEGOOSE.

Peasants and their women in party dress.

Two young girls carrying the virgin's bonnet.

Two others in white veils.

Two others, wearing gloves and a corsage at the waist.

ANTONIO holding SUZANNE's hand to give her away to FIGARO.

Other girls with other types of bonnets and veils.

MARCELINE wearing a white veil and bonnet similar to the first.

FIGARO holding MARCELINE's hand to give her away to: The doctor, who brings up the rear of the procession, wearing a large boutonniere.

The girls, as they pass in front of the COUNT, deliver to his footmen the paraphernalia for SUZANNE and MARCELINE.

The peasants, men and women, in two lines, dance the fandango to an accompaniment of castanets. Then the orchestra plays the introduction of the duet, during which ANTONIO

* Presumed to be an old Spanish dance, but known to us only through a theme in $\frac{3}{4}$ time called Follia in Corelli's Solos, op. 5, and used also by Vivaldi and others. *Folies* here does not imply folly but foliage, as in *Folies Bergère*.

takes SUZANNE to the COUNT. She kneels before him, he puts the virgin's bonnet on her head, and gives her a bouquet. During this ceremony the girls sing the following duet:

Sing, young bride, the grateful benefaction!

Your master has his selfish lust displaced:

He gives up pleasure for a noble action,

And to your husband hands you pure and chaste.

As the duet concludes, SUZANNE, still kneeling, tugs at the COUNT's cloak and shows him the note she has for him. She then puts her hand to her hair and he takes the note while seeming to adjust her bonnet. He puts the note inside his coat, the duet ends, SUZANNE rises and makes a low curtsy. FIGARO receives SUZANNE from the hand of the COUNT and steps back with her to the other end of the room, near MARCELINE.

There is meanwhile a reprise of the fandango. The COUNT, being in a hurry to read his note, comes downstage and pulls the paper from his pocket. The pin evidently pricks him, for he shakes his finger, squeezes it, and licks it. He looks at the folded paper and speaks.

COUNT. The devil take all women! They stick pins into everything.

He throws the pin on the ground, reads the note, and kisses it. While he and FIGARO speak, the orchestra plays *pianissimo*. FIGARO, who has seen the byplay, speaks to SUZANNE and his mother.

FIGARO. It must be a billet-doux some little wench slipped into his hand as she walked by. It was sealed with a pin which impudently pricked him.

The dance resumes. The COUNT turns the note over and sees the request to return the pin. He looks for it on the ground, finds it, and sticks it in his sleeve.

FIGARO, to SUZANNE and MARCELINE. From the beloved any object is dear, so he's retrieved the pin. What a harlequin he is!

Meanwhile, SUZANNE and the COUNTESS have been exchanging signals. The dance concludes and the introduction of

Women
who played
these roles

the duet is played again. FIGARO takes MARCELINE to the COUNT, and the ceremony repeats. But just as the COUNT lifts the bonnet and as the duet strikes up, the proceedings are interrupted by a great noise at the door.

FOOTMAN. Keep back, keep back, gentlemen, you can't all get in together. Help here! The guards!

Guards step quickly toward the door.

COUNT, *rising*. What is the matter there?

FOOTMAN. My lord, it is Mister Basil, who is followed by the whole township because he sings as he walks.

COUNT. Admit him alone.

COUNTESS. Please command me to withdraw.

COUNT. I shan't forget your obliging me.

COUNTESS. Suzanne! . . .

To the COUNT.

She will be back at once.

Aside, to SUZANNE.

Let's go change our clothes.

Exeunt.

MARCELINE. He never shows up but to do harm.

FIGARO. You see if I don't change his tune.

Enter BASIL, guitar in hand, followed by SUNSTRUCK.

BASIL *sings to the music of the final song of the play.*

Faithful, tender, loving hearts
Who condemn love's wanderings
Do not launch your angry darts:
It is not a crime to change,
For if Cupid carries wings
It must be to flit and range!
It must be to flit and range!

FIGARO, *going toward BASIL*. Yes, that's the reason precisely why Love has wings on his back. Friend, what do you mean by your song?

BASIL, *pointing to SUNSTRUCK*. I mean that after showing submissiveness to my lord and entertaining this gentleman, who is of my lord's company, I want to claim my lord's justice.

SUNSTRUCK. Pah, your lordsy, he didn't entertain me at all—he just had fits of yodeling!

COUNT. What is it you want, Basil?

BASIL. That which already belongs to me, my lord—the hand of Marceline.

FIGARO, *drawing near*. How long has it been since you saw the face of a lunatic?

BASIL. My good sir, I see one right now.

FIGARO. Since you use my eyes as a mirror, study the effect therein of the prophecy I am about to make: if you so much as seem to gravitate toward madame—

BARTHOLO, *laughing*. But why? Let him speak.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *coming forward*. Is it n-necessary for two old f-friends . . .

FIGARO. He and I friends?

BASIL. Absurd!

FIGARO, *setting a rapid pace for the ensuing dialogue*. Friends because he writes the dullest church music?

BASIL. While he writes newspaper verse?

FIGARO. A tavern musician!

BASIL. A penny-a-liner!

FIGARO. An oratorio-monger!

BASIL. A diplomatic nag!

COUNT, *seated*. Vulgarians both!

BASIL. He's failed me at every turn.

FIGARO. That's an idea I wish were true.

BASIL. He goes round calling me an ass.

FIGARO. Don't mistake me for public opinion.

BASIL. Whereas there's hardly a talented singer I haven't trained.

FIGARO. Strained!

BASIL. He persists!

FIGARO. And why shouldn't I, if I speak the truth? Are you a prince that you should be flattered? Learn to live with the truth, faker! It's certain no liar could make much of you.

Perhaps you're afraid the truth will come out of our mouths?
If so, why did you interrupt our nuptials?

BASIL, *to MARCELINE*. Did you or did you not promise me that
if you weren't provided for within four years, you would
give me your hand?

MARCELINE. Under what condition did I promise this?

BASIL. That if you found your lost child, I would adopt him
out of kindness to you.

ALL, *together*. He's been found!

BASIL. All right, I'm ready.

ALL, *together, pointing to FIGARO*. There he is!

BASIL, *shrinking back*. Get thee behind me!

BRIDLEGOOSE. That means you g-give up his d-dear mother?

BASIL. What could be worse than to be thought the father of
such a fellow?

FIGARO. Why, to be thought your son! You're pulling my leg!

BASIL, *pointing to FIGARO*. The moment this character is some-
body in this house, I want everyone to know that I am
nobody.

Exit.

BARTHOLO, *laughing*. Hahahah!

FIGARO, *leaping with joy*. At last, at last, I'll have my bride!

COUNT, *aside*. And I my mistress.

He rises.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *to MARCELINE*. With everybody s-satisfied.

COUNT. Let the two marriage contracts be drawn up. I shall
sign them.

ALL, *together*. Bravo!

COUNT. I need time to myself.

He starts to leave with the others.

SUNSTRUCK, *to FIGARO*. Now I'm going to set up the fireworks
under the elms as I was told.

COUNT, *coming back*. What idiot gave you that order?

FIGARO. What's wrong with it?

COUNT. Why, the Countess is indisposed. How can she see the

display from indoors unless it's on the terrace, below her
room?

FIGARO. You heard him, Sunstruck? On the terrace.

COUNT. Under the elms, the ideal!

Leaving, aside.

They were going to set fire to my tête-à-tête.

FIGARO. What considerateness for his wife!

Starts to leave.

MARCELINE, *stopping him*. A word with you, my son. I owe
you an apology. Mistaken feeling for you made me unjust
to your wife: I thought her in league with the Count, even
though Basil had told me she always rejected his advances.

FIGARO. You don't know your son if you think that female
whims and wiles can shake him. I challenge the cleverest to
upset me.

MARCELINE. It's nice to feel that way, at any rate, because
jealousy—

FIGARO. Is but a stupid child of pride, or else it's a madman's
disease. I assure you, Mother, on this point I'm a philosopher
—unshakable. So if Suzanne ever deceives me, I forgive her
in advance, for she will have worked hard and long to do it.

*He turns and sees FANCHETTE, who is looking everywhere
for someone.*

FIGARO. So-o, little cousin! Getting an earful?

FANCHETTE. Oh, no! I was brought up to think it's not nice.

FIGARO. True enough, but since it's useful, it's often considered
worth the trouble.

FANCHETTE. I was finding out if somebody was here.

FIGARO. So young and so full of guile! You know perfectly well
he can't be here.

FANCHETTE. Who's that?

FIGARO. Cherubino.

FANCHETTE. It isn't he I'm after. I know where *he* is. It's cousin
Sue.

FIGARO. And what do you want with her?

FANCHETTE. I can tell *you*, because you're my cousin now. It's about a pin I'm supposed to give her.

FIGARO, *startled*. (A pin? A pin did you say? And from whom, you little hussy? At your age you're already in the business of—

He catches himself and goes on gently.

You're already pretty good at whatever you do, Fanchette; and my pretty cousin is so obliging that—

FANCHETTE. What did I do to make you cross with me? I'm going . . .

FIGARO. Don't. I was only teasing. I'll tell you: that pin of yours is one that my lord told you to give to Suzanne. It's the one that fastened the paper he had in his hand: you see I know what I'm talking about.

FANCHETTE. Why ask me if you know?

FIGARO, *fumbling*. Oh . . . because it's fun to know how his lordship went about sending you on your errand.

FANCHETTE, *with naïveté*. Well, he did it almost as you say: "Here, Fanchette," he said, "give back this pin to your beautiful cousin; just tell her it's the seal for the big elms."

FIGARO. "The big—?"

FANCHETTE. "—elms." Oh, yes, and he added: "Be sure no one sees you."

FIGARO. Well, cousin, you must do as you're told and it's lucky no one *has* seen you. Run your pretty errand and don't tell Suzanne a word more than his lordship told you.

FANCHETTE. Why should I say more, cousin? He takes me for a child.

She goes out, skipping.

FIGARO. Well, Mother?

MARCELINE. Well, my son?

FIGARO, *choking*. That cursed clown! Really some things are too much!

MARCELINE. Some things? What things?

FIGARO, *hands on his breast*. What I've just learned, Mother, weighs on me like lead—here.

MARCELINE, *laughing*. It would seem that your assured countenance of a while ago was only an inflated bag of wind—a pin has made it collapse.

FIGARO, *furious*. But that pin, Mother, that pin was the one he picked up!

MARCELINE, *recalling his words*. "As for jealousy, I am a philosopher—unshakable: if Suzanne deceives me, I forgive her . . ."

FIGARO. Oh, Mother, a man speaks as he feels at the time. Let the coolest judge on the bench plead his own case and see how he explains the law. I understand now why he was so annoyed about the fireworks. As for my darling and her subtlety with pins, she hasn't got where she thinks she is, elms or no elms. It's true my marriage is enough to warrant my anger, but it isn't enough to keep me from dropping one wife and wedding another.

MARCELINE. A splendid conclusion! Let's wreck everything on a mere suspicion. How do you know it's you she's deceiving and not the Count? Have you studied her thoroughly that you condemn her without appeal? Do you know for a fact that she is going under those trees, or what her intentions are, or what she will say and do if she goes there? I thought you had more judgment!

FIGARO, *kissing her hand*. A mother is always right, Mother, and you are right, entirely right! But make allowance, dear Mamma, for natural impulse. One feels better after giving way to it. Now let us weigh before accusing and acting. I know where the assignation is to be. Farewell, Mother.

Exit.

MARCELINE. Farewell. And I too know where it is. Now that I've stopped him, I'd better look after Suzanne—or rather, give her warning. She is such a pretty creature! I must say, when our own interest does not divide us, we women are all inclined to make common cause in defense of our down-trodden sex against this proud, terrifying (*laughing*) and somewhat slow-witted masculine sex.

Exit.

ACT V

A stand of elms in the park. Two pavilions, kiosks, or garden temples occupy respectively the right and left middle ground. Behind is a clearing hung with decorations; in front a lawn with seats. The scene is dark.

FANCHETTE, *alone and carrying in one hand two small cakes and an orange; in the other, a lighted paper lantern.* He said the pavilion on the left. It must be this one. But what if my fine fellow doesn't show up? They wouldn't even give me an orange and two cookies, those kitchen people. "But for whom, miss?" "Why, sir, it's for somebody." "We thought as much, miss." Supposing the worst—just because my lord doesn't want to set eyes on him, that's no reason he should starve. All the same, it cost me a big kiss on the cheek. Who knows, maybe he'll pay me back for it in kind.

She catches sight of FIGARO, who comes forward to identify her. She cries out.

Ah! . . .

Runs away and enters pavilion at left.

FIGARO, *in a large cloak, alone at first.* It's Fanchette!

He scans the others as they arrive and speaks roughly to them.

Good day, gentlemen, good evening. Are you all here?

BASIL. All those you asked to come.

FIGARO. What time is it, about?

ANTONIO, *nose in the air.* The moon should be up.

BARTHOLO. What black arts are you getting ready for? He looks like a conspirator.

FIGARO. Isn't it for a wedding that you're gathered at the castle?

ACT V

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BRIDLEGOOSE. C-certainly.

ANTONIO. We were going over yonder, in the park, and wait for the signal to start the festivities.

FIGARO. You shan't go a step farther. It's here, under the elms, that we're going to celebrate the faithful bride I am marrying and the faithful lord who has reassigned her to himself.

BASIL, *recalling the day's events.* Ah, yes. I know all about it. Let's remove ourselves, if you please. It's a matter of a rendezvous. I'll tell you about it later.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *to FIGARO.* We'll c-come back.

FIGARO. When you hear me call, don't fail to appear. You can curse me if I don't provide you with a fine spectacle.

BARTHOLO. Remember that a wise man does not start a quarrel with the great and powerful.

FIGARO. I'll remember.

BARTHOLO. They begin with a score of forty-love against us, thanks to their rank.

FIGARO. To say nothing of their capacity for hard work, which you're forgetting. But remember also that once a man is known to be scared, he's at the mercy of every scoundrel.

BARTHOLO. Well said.

FIGARO. And among my names is Greenleaf, from my mother's side.

BARTHOLO. He is full of the devil.

BRIDLEGOOSE. He y-y-is.

BASIL, *aside.* The Count and Suzanne planned this without me—I'm rather glad of this ambush.

FIGARO, *to the footmen.* You fellows do as I told you—light up all around here, or in the name of Death, which I'd like to throttle, when I grab the arm of one of you—

He grabs SUNSTRUCK.

SUNSTRUCK *goes off crying.* Ah, oh, ah, perish the brute!

BASIL, *leaving.* God give you joy, young newlywed!

FIGARO, *pacing up and down alone in the dark and speaking in somber tones.* Oh, woman, woman, woman! weak and deceitful creature! No animal on earth can go against in-

stinct; is it yours to deceive? After refusing me stubbornly when I begged her in front of her mistress—in the very instant of plighting her troth to me, in the middle of the ceremony— He was laughing as he read, the traitor! And I, like a poor booby . . . No, my lord Count, you shan't have her, you shan't! Because you are a great lord you think you are a great genius. Nobility, wealth, honors, emoluments—it all makes a man so proud! What have you done to earn so many advantages? You took the trouble to be born, nothing more. Apart from that, you're a rather common type. Whereas I—by God!—lost in the nameless crowd, I had to exert more strategy and skill merely to survive than has been spent for a hundred years in governing the Spanish Empire. . . . And you want to tangle with me!

Someone's coming—it is she—no, it's nobody. The night is dark as pitch and here am I plying the silly trade of husband, even though I'm only half of one.

He sits on a bench.

Can anything be stranger than my career? The son of God knows whom, stolen by bandits and reared in their ways, I become disgusted and try to lead an honest life. Everywhere I am repulsed. I learn chemistry, pharmacy, surgery, yet the whole influence of a great lord hardly succeeds in securing me the practice of a veterinary. Tired of pestering sick animals, hoping in fact to do just the opposite, I go headlong for the stage. Far better have hung a millstone around my neck! I write a play satirizing life in the harem: being a Spanish author I thought I could make fun of Mohammed without fear. At once, an emissary from God knows where complains that my verses offend the Sublime Porte, Persia, part of the Indian peninsula, all of Egypt, the kingdoms of Barca, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco—and there goes my play up the spout, to please the Mohammedan princes, not one of whom (I believe) can read, and all of whom brand us on the shoulder and call us Christian dogs. Whoever fails to degrade the mind avenges himself by insulting it. My cheeks were growing hollow, my lodging was unpaid, I could see from afar the threatening bailiff with a pen stuck in his wig, so I shudder and exert myself afresh. A

public debate starts up about the nature of wealth, and since one needn't own something in order to argue about it, being in fact penniless, I write on the value of money and interest. Immediately, I find myself inside a coach looking at the drawbridge of a prison and leaving hope and freedom behind.

He gets up.

How I should like to hold in the hollow of my hand one of these potentates who last four days in office and are so ready to ordain punishments! When a healthy fall from grace had sobered his pride, I'd let him know that printed nonsense is dangerous only in countries where its free circulation is hampered; that without the right to criticize, praise and approval are worthless, and that only petty men fear petty writings.

Sits down.

One day, tired of feeding an obscure guest, they threw me out into the street, and since a man must eat even when out of jail, I sharpen my quill once more and ask people what is in the news. I am told that during my retreat at public expense, free trade and a free press have been established in Madrid, so that, provided I do not write about the government, or about religion, or politics, or morals, or those in power, or public bodies, or the Opera, or the other state theatres, or about anybody who is active in anything, I can print whatever I want with perfect freedom under the supervision of two or three censors. To take advantage of such sweet liberty, I let it be known that I am starting a periodical, and to make sure that I am not treading on anybody's heels, I call it *The Useless Journal*. Mercy! No sooner done than I see a thousand poor devils of subsidized hacks in arms against me. I am put down and once again unemployed. Despair nearly had me by the throat when someone thought of me for a vacant place. Unfortunately I was qualified for it. They needed an accountant and put in a dancer. The only way out was to turn thief. I set up as croupier of a gambling den. Ah, then, my dears, I was in the swim! I dine out and people known as respectable courteously open their houses to me, keeping for themselves only three quarters of

the history

being a P.W.

Ownership

the take. I could have recouped all my losses—I had even begun to understand that to grow rich, know-how is better than knowledge, but since everyone around me was robbing the till while requiring that I stay honest, I went under for the third time.

I'd had enough and meant to break with the world—five fathoms of water would suffice, and nearly did, when my guardian angel recalled me to my original trade. I take up my razors and lancet and leave glory to the fools who feed on its aroma. With it also, I leave behind dishonor, which is too heavy a load for a pedestrian. Hiking from town to town, shaving as I go, I live at last a life without care. But a great lord passing through Seville recognizes me. I get him married off, and as a reward for my helping him secure a wife, he now wants to intercept mine. Thereupon, storms and intrigues. I am on the edge of an abyss, nearly wedded to my own mother, when lo! my relatives materialize, Indian file.

He gets up and grows vehement.

Follows a regular scrimmage—“It's he, it's you, it's I. No, it isn't, not I.” Well, who then?

He falls back into the seat.

What an incredible series of events! How did it happen to me? Why these things and not others? Who drew them down on my head? Forcibly set on the road of life, not knowing where it leads, and bound to leave it against my will. I've tried to keep it as rosy as my natural cheerfulness permits. Here again I say *my* cheerfulness without knowing if it belongs to me any more than those other things; nor do I know who this *I* may be with which I am so concerned—it's first a shapeless collection of unknown parts, then a helpless puny thing, then a lively little animal, then a young man thirsting for pleasure, with a full capacity to enjoy and ready to use any shifts to live—master here and valet there, at the whim of fortune; ambitious from vanity, industrious from need—and lazy . . . with delight! An orator in tight spots, a poet for relaxation, a musician from time to time, a lover in hot fits: I have seen everything, done everything, worn out

everything. At last my illusion is shattered and I'm now wholly disabused . . . blasé . . . Oh, Suzy! Suzy! my Suzy, what torments you are putting me through! I hear footsteps . . . some one's coming . . . This is the crisis.

He retires into the downstage wing on his right. Enter the COUNTESS dressed as SUZANNE, SUZANNE dressed as the COUNTESS, and MARCELINE.

SUZANNE, *speaking low to the COUNTESS.* Yes, Marceline said Figaro would be here.

MARCELINE. And so he is; be quiet.

SUZANNE. I see; the one's eavesdropping, the other's coming to fetch me—let the show begin.

MARCELINE. I don't want to miss a word; I'm going to hide in the pavilion.

Enters the same pavilion as FANCHETTE.

SUZANNE, *aloud.* You're trembling, madam: are you cold?

COUNTESS, *aloud.* The evening is damp, I am going in.

SUZANNE, *aloud.* If my lady does not need me, I should like to take the air a little while under the trees.

COUNTESS, *aloud.* Take the air! Catch your death, you mean.

SUZANNE. I'm used to it.

FIGARO, *aside.* Her death, my eye!

SUZANNE *retreats to a spot near the wings, on the opposite side from FIGARO.*

CHERUBINO, *dressed as an officer, comes on singing the words of his song.* “Tra-la-la-la-la, / A godmother I had, / Whom always I adored!”

COUNTESS, *aside.* The little page!

CHERUBINO. People are walking about. I must take to my refuge, where Fanchette is—oh, it's a woman!

COUNTESS. Oh, mercy!

CHERUBINO, *stooping and peering.* Am I mistaken? That hat I see with feathers outlined against the sky looks to me like Suzy.

COUNTESS. Oh, if the Count were to appear!

The COUNT enters from the back.

CHERUBINO goes up to COUNTESS and takes her hand; she pulls away. I'm right, it's that adorable girl named Suel! How could I mistake this soft hand, or that slight trembling . . . or the beating of my own heart!

He tries to put the COUNTESS's hand against his heart.

COUNTESS, *whispering*. Go away!

CHERUBINO. Could it be that you took pity on my lot and came here where I have been hiding since afternoon?

COUNTESS. Figaro is coming.

COUNT, *stepping forward, aside*. Isn't that Suzanne I see?

CHERUBINO, to COUNTESS. I'm not afraid of Figaro and it's not him you're waiting for.

COUNTESS. Who then?

COUNT, *aside*. Somebody is with her.

CHERUBINO. It's my lord, hussy, who asked you out here this morning when I hid behind the chair.

COUNT, *aside, furious*. It's that infernal page again!

FIGARO, *aside*. And they say it isn't nice to eavesdrop!

SUZANNE, *aside*. The little chatterbox!

COUNTESS, to CHERUBINO. Do me the kindness to go away.

CHERUBINO. Not without a reward for my compliance.

COUNTESS, *frightened*. You claim—?

CHERUBINO, *with heat*. Twenty kisses on your account first; then a hundred for your fair mistress.

COUNTESS. You would not dare!

CHERUBINO. Yes, I would! You're taking her place with my lord, I take his with you. The one who gets left is Figaro.

FIGARO, *aside*. The rascalion!

SUZANNE, *aside*. Brash as a little page!

CHERUBINO tries to kiss the COUNTESS; the COUNT comes between them and receives the kiss.

COUNTESS, *retreating*. Dear God!

FIGARO, *aside, hearing the sound of the kiss*. It's a pretty baggage I'm marrying!

Listens intently.

CHERUBINO, *feeling the COUNT's clothes; aside*. It's my lord! He flees into the pavilion where FANCHETTE and MARCELINE are hiding.

FIGARO, *approaching*. I'm going to—

COUNT, *thinking the PAGE still there*. Since you don't repeat the kiss . . .

Lashes out with his hand.

FIGARO, *coming within range, gets the slap. Owl!*

COUNT. That's one paid off, anyhow.

FIGARO, *retreating and rubbing his cheek*. This eavesdropping business isn't all pure gain.

SUZANNE, *laughing*. Hahahaha!

COUNT, to COUNTESS, *whom he mistakes for SUZANNE*. That page is beyond belief—he gets slapped full in the face and goes off laughing.

FIGARO, *aside*. He should be grieving for me!

COUNT. And he's intolerable: I can't take a step— But let's forget the puzzle or it will spoil the delight I feel in finding you here.

COUNTESS, *imitating SUZANNE's voice*. Were you expecting me?

COUNT. What do you think, after your clever note?

He takes her hand.

You're trembling.

COUNTESS. I've been frightened.

COUNT. It wasn't to deprive you of a kiss that I took his.

Kisses her on the forehead.

COUNTESS. Such liberties!

FIGARO, *aside*. The trollopl!

SUZANNE, *aside*. The darling!

COUNT takes COUNTESS's hand. How fine and soft your skin is! Your hand is more lovely than the Countess's.

COUNTESS, *aside*. What preconception will do!

COUNT. And this little arm, how firm and round . . . these pretty fingers full of grace and mischief!

COUNTESS, *speaking like SUZANNE*. And what of love . . . ?

COUNT. Love . . . is the fiction of the heart. Its history is pleasure, and hence you find me at your feet.

COUNTESS. You do not love her any more?

COUNT. I love her very much, but three years make marriage so respectable.

COUNTESS. What did you want from her?

COUNT, *caressing her*. What I find in you, my sweet.

COUNTESS. But tell me what . . .

COUNT. I don't know . . . less sameness, perhaps; more spice in your manner—something, I don't know what, which makes for charm, it's because you deny me sometimes, I don't know. Our wives think they can't do better than to love us. They take this for granted and love us and love us—if they love us—and they are so compliant and constant, always and without stint, that suddenly one day one finds satiety where one looked for happiness.

COUNTESS, *aside*. What a lesson to me!

COUNT. To tell the truth, Suzy, I have often thought that when we seek elsewhere the pleasure we miss in them, it is because they make no effort to sustain our interest, to renew their attractions in love, to resurrect (so to speak) the delight of possession by affording that of variety.

COUNTESS, *vexed*. And so theirs is the whole responsibility?

COUNT, *laughing*. And the man has none, you mean? Well, can we change nature? Our task is to obtain . . .

COUNTESS. Yes, and theirs—?

COUNT. Is to . . . retain . . . That's generally overlooked.

COUNTESS. Not by me.

COUNT. Nor me.

FIGARO, *aside*. Nor me.

SUZANNE, *aside*. Nor me.

COUNT, *taking COUNTESS's hand again*. There's an echo hereabouts; let's lower our voices. You for one needn't worry about holding a man! Love has fashioned you so fair and sprightly. Add a touch of caprice and you would be the most titillating mistress.

Kisses her forehead.

My Suzy, a Castilian has nothing but his word of honor. I give you the ransom I promised, to redeem that old claim I no longer have upon the sweet concession you are about to make me.

COUNTESS, *curtsying*. Your Suzanne accepts everything.

FIGARO, *aside*. They don't exist more wanton than that.

SUZANNE, *aside*. It means good money in our pockets.

COUNT, *aside*. She's mercenary—all the better!

COUNTESS, *turning toward the back*. I see torches.

COUNT. That's for your wedding. Let's go into the pavilion until they're by.

COUNTESS. Without a light?

COUNT, *pulling her gently*. Why a light? We don't intend to read.

FIGARO, *aside*. She's going in, the drab! I thought so.

He steps forward.

COUNT, *turning around, in a voice of command*. Who's wandering around there?

FIGARO, *angry*. Nobody's wandering; I'm coming on purpose!

COUNT, *to COUNTESS*. It's Figaro.

He runs away.

COUNTESS. I'll follow you.

She enters the pavilion on the right while the COUNT hides in the wood at the back.

FIGARO, *trying to find them both*. I don't hear anything. They must have gone in. So here we are.

In a changed voice.

Oh, you clumsy husbands who hire spies and toy with suspicion for months without confirming it, why not take your cue from me? I shadow my wife from the beginning, the first day. I listen secretly, and in a twinkling I know everything: it's enchanting—no doubts left, all is known.

Pacing briskly.

Lucky that it doesn't bother me and that I'm no longer upset by her treachery. I've got them at last.

SUZANNE, *creeping up behind him; aside*. You're going to pay for those fine suspicions!

Imitating the COUNTESS.

Who goes there?

FIGARO, *wildly*. "Who goes there?" A man who thinks the plague should have taken—

SUZANNE. Why, it's Figaro!

FIGARO, *quickly*. My lady Countess!

SUZANNE. Speak low!

FIGARO, *quickly*. Ah, madam, how fortunate that you should have come. Where do you think my lord may be?

SUZANNE. What does an ungrateful husband matter to me? Tell me rather—

FIGARO, *speaking still more rapidly*. And Suzanne, my bride, where do you imagine she might be?

SUZANNE. *Please* lower your voice!

FIGARO. Suzanne, my Suzy whom everybody thought so virtuous, who acted so modest! Well, they're locked up in there. I'm going to call out.

SUZANNE, *putting her hand on his mouth and forgetting to disguise her voice*. Don't call out!

FIGARO, *aside*. This is Suzy! Damn!

SUZANNE, *imitating the* COUNTESS. You seem upset.

FIGARO, *aside*. The minx! Trying to catch me!

SUZANNE. We must avenge ourselves, Figaro.

FIGARO. Do you feel a pressing need of it?

SUZANNE. Am I not a woman? Men, though, have better means.

FIGARO, *confiding*. Madam, your presence is as necessary as mine. And women's means . . . are the best.

SUZANNE, *aside*. I'd like to slap the lout!

FIGARO, *aside*. Wouldn't it be fun if even before we're married . . .

SUZANNE. But what kind of revenge is it that lacks the spice of love?

FIGARO. If you see no signs of love, you may be sure I am only restrained by deference.

SUZANNE, *nettled*. I can't tell whether you mean that honestly, but you certainly don't say it gracefully.

FIGARO, *with comical fervor, kneeling*. Oh, madam, I worship you. But consider the time, the place, the circumstance, and let your anger supply the fire which my entreaty lacks.

SUZANNE, *aside*. My hand is itching.

FIGARO, *aside*. My heart is beating.

SUZANNE. But sir, have you reflected?

FIGARO. Oh, yes, madam, yes indeed, I have reflected.

SUZANNE. In anger and in love—

FIGARO. Delay is fatal, I know. Your hand, madam.

SUZANNE, *in her own voice and slapping him*. Here it is.

FIGARO. Lucifer, what a fist!

SUZANNE. What fist—is this the one?

Slaps him again.

FIGARO. Now, what the devil? Are you playing windmill?

SUZANNE, *slapping him with each phrase*. "Ah, Lucifer, Suzanne!" Take *that* for your suspicion, and *that* for your revenge, and *that* for your schemes, and your insults, and your double-dealing. Then you can say as you did this morning! "That's love for you!"

FIGARO, *laughing as he gets up*. By all the saints, it is!—pure love! What happiness, what bliss! Thrice-blessed Figaro. Hit me, beloved, again and again. Only, when you're through painting me black and blue, Suzy, look kindly upon the luckiest man ever beaten by a woman.

SUZANNE. The luckiest, you scoundrel? As if you weren't busy seducing the Countess with your pretty turns of phrase, to the point where I was forgetting myself and yielding in her place!

FIGARO. As if I had mistaken the sound of your lovely voice!

SUZANNE, *laughing*. You recognized me, did you? I'll take my toll for that too.

FIGARO. Just like a woman to beat a body and bear a grudge besides. But tell me by what good fortune I find you here when I thought you there. And these clothes, which fooled me at first, and now prove you innocent . . .

SUZANNE. *You are the innocent, to walk into a trap laid for someone else. Is it our fault if in trying to catch a fox we catch two?*

FIGARO. Who's catching the other?

SUZANNE. His wife.

FIGARO. His wife?

SUZANNE. His wife.

FIGARO, *wildly*. Ah, Figaro, go hang yourself on the nearest tree. You never guessed! His wife! Oh, clever, clever, clever women. So all those resounding kisses . . .

SUZANNE. Fell on my lady.

FIGARO. And the one from the page?

SUZANNE. On my lord.

FIGARO. And this morning, behind the chair?

SUZANNE. On nobody.

FIGARO. Are you sure?

SUZANNE, *laughing*. Figaro! You know how fists fly about at dusk!

FIGARO *seizes her hand and kisses it*. Yours are jewels to me. But the Count's in my face was fair enough.

SUZANNE. Come, proud one, abase yourself.

FIGARO, *acting as he speaks*. Fair enough: on my knees, bowed low, prone and flat on the ground.

SUZANNE, *laughing*. The poor Count! What trouble he's gone to . . .

FIGARO, *rising and kneeling*. . . . to seduce his wife.

COUNT, *entering from the back and going straight to the pavilion on the right; aside*. I can't find her in the wood; perhaps she's stepped in here.

SUZANNE, *whispering to FIGARO*. There he goes.

COUNT, *at the open door of the pavilion*. Suzanne, are you there?

FIGARO, *low*. He's looking for her. I thought . . .

SUZANNE, *low*. He never recognized her.

FIGARO. Let's finish him off, shall we?

Kisses her hand noisily.

COUNT, *turning round*. A man kneeling before the Countess . . . And I'm unarmed.

He comes forward.

FIGARO, *rising and disguising his voice*. Forgive me, madam, if I did not realize that this meeting place would be in the path of the festivities.

COUNT, *aside*. That's the man of this morning in the dressing room.

He strikes his forehead.

FIGARO. But such a silly interference shan't postpone our pleasure.

COUNT, *aside*. Death and damnation!

FIGARO, *leading SUZANNE to the pavilion; aside*. He's cursing. *Aloud.*

Let us hasten, madam, and repair the misfortune we suffered earlier when I jumped out of the window.

COUNT, *aside*. Now I see it all!

SUZANNE, *near the pavilion on the left*. Before we go in, make sure nobody is following.

He kisses her forehead.

COUNT, *shouting*. Revenge!

SUZANNE flees into the pavilion where MARCELINE, FANCHETTE, and CHERUBINO already are. The COUNT seizes FIGARO by the arm.

FIGARO, *pretending great fright*. It's the master!

COUNT. Ah, villain, it's you! Ho, somebody, come at once!

Enter PETER, booted and spurred.

PETER. So there you are, my lord, at last.

COUNT. Good! Are you alone, Peter?

PETER. Back from Seville, hell for leather.

COUNT. Come close to me and shout very loud.

PETER, *at the top of his lungs*. No more page in Seville than on the back of my hand—and that's a fact!

COUNT, *pushing him away*. Stupid oaf!

PETER. Your lordship said I must shout aloud.

COUNT, *holding* FIGARO. It was to call for help. Ho, there, somebody! Whoever hears me, come quick!

PETER. Figaro's here with me: what are you afraid of?

Enter BRIDLEGOOSE, BARTHOLO, BASIL, ANTONIO, and SUN-STRUCK, *followed by the wedding party carrying torches.*

BARTHOLO, *to* FIGARO. You see: we came as soon as we heard you.

COUNT, *pointing to the pavilion on the left.* Peter, guard that door.

PETER *goes.*

BASIL, *low, to* FIGARO. You caught him with Suzanne?

COUNT, *pointing to* FIGARO. You, vassals, surround this man and answer for him with your lives.

BASIL. Oh, oh!

COUNT, *angry.* Be quiet.

To FIGARO, *freezingly.*

Sir Knight, will you answer a few questions?

FIGARO, *coolly.* Who indeed could give me leave not to? You have command of everybody here except yourself.

COUNT, *mastering his fury.* Except myself?

ANTONIO. That's the way to talk!

COUNT, *giving way to his anger.* If anything could make me angrier, it's the air of calmness he puts on.

FIGARO. Are we like soldiers, killing and being killed for reasons they know nothing of? For my part, I always like to know what I'm angry about.

COUNT, *beside himself.* Murder!

Controlling himself.

Man of gentle birth who pretend not to know my reasons, would you at least do us the favor of telling us what lady you have brought into this pavilion?

FIGARO, *mischievously pointing to the other.* Into that one?

COUNT, *quickly.* Into this.

FIGARO, *coldly.* That's different. It's a young lady who honors me with her favors.

BASIL, *surprised.* Oh?

COUNT, *quickly.* You heard him, gentlemen?

BARTHOLO, *surprised.* We heard him.

COUNT. And this young person is otherwise unattached?

FIGARO, *coldly.* I know that a great lord paid her some attentions for a while. But whether it be that he neglected her or that she likes me better, I am the one preferred.

COUNT, *quickly.* The one pref—

Restraining himself.

At least he is candid. What he has just admitted, I myself have seen and heard, gentlemen, from the mouth of his accomplice. I give you my word on it.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *petrified.* His accomplice!

COUNT, *in a fury.* Now, when dishonor is public, so must be the revenge!

He goes into the pavilion.

ANTONIO. He's right.

BRIDLEGOOSE, *to* FIGARO. Who took who-o-o's wife?

FIGARO, *laughing.* No one had that special satisfaction.

COUNT, *speaking from inside the pavilion and tugging at someone not yet identifiable.* It is no use, madam, the hour has struck and you are doomed.

He comes out and turns to the rest without looking.

How fortunate that there lives no pledge of our hateful union—!

FIGARO, *calling out.* Cherubino!

COUNT. The page!

BASIL. Haha!

COUNT. Always the damned page! What were you doing in that room?

CHERUBINO, *shyly.* I was hiding, as you ordered me to do.

PETER. What use was it to nearly kill a horse!

COUNT. Go in there, Antonio, and bring before her judge the criminal who has dishonored me.

BRIDLEGOOSE. Is it my lady that you are l-looking for?

ANTONIO. 'Tis Providence, by gum, for your carryings-on all over the countryside.

COUNT, *furious*. Get in there!

ANTONIO *goes in*.

COUNT. You shall see, gentlemen, that the page was not alone.

CHERUBINO, *shyly*. It would have been hard on me if a gentle soul had not sweetened the bitter pill.

ANTONIO, *pulling out someone not recognizable at first*. Come, my lady, don't make me coax you, everybody knows you went in.

FIGARO, *calling out*. My little cousin!

BASIL. Haha!

COUNT. Fanchette!

ANTONIO turns around. By jiminy 'twas right smart, my lord, to pick on me to show the company it's my daughter caused all the randan, now wasn't it?

COUNT, *indignant*. Who could suppose she was in there?

He tries to go in.

BARTHOLO, *interposing*. Allow me, my lord. All this is far too upsetting for you; but perhaps I can deal with it in cold blood.

He goes in.

BRIDLEGOOSE. It's certainly too confusing for me.

BARTHOLO, *speaking from inside and coming out*. Do not be afraid, madam, no one will hurt you, I promise you.

He turns around and cries out.

Marceline!

BASIL. Haha!

FIGARO, *laughing*. A madhouse! My mother in it too!

ANTONIO. The jades are playing who can be the worst.

COUNT, *outraged*. What is that to me? It's the Countess . . .

SUZANNE *comes out, her face behind a fan*.

Ah, there she is at last, gentlemen.

He takes her violently by the arm.

What does such an odious woman deserve, gentlemen—?

SUZANNE *falls on her knees, bowing her head*.

COUNT. Never, never!

FIGARO *kneels next to her*.

COUNT, *louder*. Never!

MARCELINE *kneels beside the others*.

COUNT, *still louder*. Never, never!

They all kneel.

COUNT, *beside himself*. Never, not if there were a hundred of you!

COUNTESS, *coming out of the other pavilion*. At least, I can make one more.

She kneels.

COUNT, *looking alternately at SUZANNE and the COUNTESS*. What do I see?

BRIDLEGOOSE, *laughing*. What d'you kn-n-know, it's my lady!

COUNT, *trying to lift her up*. It was you, Countess?

In a supplicating tone.

Only the most generous forgiveness . . .

COUNTESS, *laughing*. In my place, you would say "Never, never!" whereas I, for the third time today, forgive you unconditionally.

She gets up.

SUZANNE, *getting up*. And so do I.

MARCELINE, *getting up*. And I.

FIGARO, *getting up*. And I. There's an echo hereabouts.

All get up.

COUNT. An echo! I tried to outsmart them and they fooled me like a child.

COUNTESS, *laughing*. Don't act as if you were sorry, my lord.

FIGARO, *brushing off his knees with his hat*. A day like today is ideal training for an ambassador.

COUNT, *to SUZANNE*. That note sealed with a pin? . . .

SUZANNE. Madam dictated it.

COUNT. The answer is overdue.

He kisses the COUNTESS's hand.

COUNTESS. Each will regain his own.

She gives the purse to FIGARO and the diamond to SUZANNE.

SUZANNE, *to FIGARO*. Still another dowry!

FIGARO, *striking the purse*. That makes three. But this one took some contriving.

SUZANNE. Like our marriage.

SUNSTRUCK. What about the bride's garter? Can I have it?

COUNTESS, *taking out the ribbon from her bosom*. The garter? It was in her clothes. Here you are.

She throws the ribbon; the boys try to scramble for it.

CHERUBINO, *swiftly picking it up*. Try and get it!

COUNT, *laughing*. Since you're so touchy a gentleman, what made you laugh so hard when I boxed your ear?

CHERUBINO, *taking a step backward and half drawing his sword*. My ear, colonel?

FIGARO, *comically angry*. He got it on my cheek, as always happens when lords mete out justice.

COUNT, *laughing*. On your cheek, ha, ha, ha, isn't that good, what do you say, dear Countess?

COUNTESS, *abstracted and returning to reality*. Indeed, dear Count, I do—for life, unswervingly: I swear it.

COUNT, *slapping BRIDLEGOOSE on the shoulder*. And you, Bridlegoose, let us have your opinion.

BRIDLEGOOSE. On what has taken p-place, my lord? Well, my opinion is that I d-don't know what to think, and that's my op-pinion.

ALL, *together*. A very sound judgment!

FIGARO. I was poor and despised. When I showed a little cleverness, hatred dogged me. Now with a pretty girl and some money . . .

BARTHOLO, *laughing*. Everybody will crowd around you!

FIGARO. Do you think so?

BARTHOLO. I know my kind.

FIGARO, *bowing to the spectators*. Aside from my wife and my goods, you are welcome to all I have.

The orchestra plays the introduction to the entertainment.

BASIL.

*Triple dowry, handsome wife—
To a husband, what largesse!*

*'Gainst a lord or beardless page
Only fools feel jealous rage.
Let the Latin proverb bless
Man's incalculable life:*

FIGARO. Don't I know that proverb!

Sings.

"Happy those of noble birth!"

BASIL. No you *don't* know it!

Sings.

"Happy those who own the earth!"

SUZANNE.

*Let a man his wife betray
He is boastful, all are gay;
Let his wife indulge her whim
She is punished, unlike him.
If you ask why this is so,
'Tis the stronger's wicked law.*

MARCELINE.

*Every man his mother knows,
Her who gives sweet life to him.
But beyond this all is dim—
How explain love's secret lure?*

FIGARO, *breaking in*.

*Secret, though the end disclose
That the offspring of a boor
May turn out a gentleman.*

FIGARO.

*By the accident of birth,
One is shepherd, t'other king.
Chance made lord and underling,
Only genius threads the maze:
Twenty kings are fed on praise
Who in death are common earth,
While Voltaire immortal stays.*

CHERUBINO.

*Flighty sex we all adore,
You who torment all our days,*

FIGARO'S MARRIAGE

Everyone complains of you;
 In the end we kneel and sue.
 To the pit thus players do:
 Such a one professes scorn
 Who would crawl to earn your bays.

FIGARO.

Jack McJohn, the jealous lout,
 Hoped to have both wife and peace;
 Hired a dog to roam about
 In the garden, fierce and free;
 Barks as claimed in guaranty:
 All are bitten by the beast,
 Save the lover from whom leased.

COUNTESS.

There's a wife who's proudly prude
 Though she loves her husband not;
 There's another, nearly lewd,
 Swears she loveth none but he;
 Now the worthiest is she,
 Never swearing this or that,
 Who but strives for honesty.

COUNT.

Any woman far from Court
 Who believes in duty strict
 In romance falls somewhat short.
 I prefer the derelict:
 Like a piece of currency,
 Stamped with one man's effigy,
 She can serve the needs of all.

SUZANNE.

If there should a moral lurk
 In this mad yet cheerful work,
 For the sake of gaiety,
 Pray accept it as a whole.
 Thus does Nature, sensibly,
 Using pleasures we pursue,
 Lead us gently to her goal.

ACT V

BRIDLEGOOSE.

Now dear sirs, the c-comic art,
 Which you shortly mean to j-judge,
 Apes the life of all of you
Sitting there and taking part.
 When annoyed you bear a g-grudge
 But although you grumble l-long,
 All our d-doings end in song.