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Dramatic Publishing
The Doctor in Spite of Himself

A Full-Length Adaptation of Moliere’s farce

By

MICHAEL R. MALKIN

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY
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(THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF)

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THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF
A Full-Length Play
For Three Women and Eight Men

CHARACTERS

SGANARELLE. husband of Martine
MARTINE. Sganarelle’s wife
MONSIEUR ROBERT. Sganarelle’s neighbor
VALERE. servant in the house of Geronte
LUCAS husband of Jacqueline,
............ servant in the house of Geronte
GERONTE. father of Lucinde
JACQUELINE wife of Lucas,
............ wet nurse in the house of Geronte
LUCINDE daughter of Geronte
LEANDRE. in love with Lucinde
THIBAUT. father of Perrin
PERRIN son of Thibaut, a peasant
ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SCENE: Sganarelle, Martine. Outside the house of Sganarelle. The lights come up.

SGANARELLE. No, I tell you, I won't. I'm the master of the house and what I say goes.
MARTINE. And I tell you that I'll do what I want to do. I didn't marry you to put up with your stupid tricks.
SGANARELLE. To have a wife is to have a pain in the neck. How right Aristotle was when he said that a wife is worse than a devil.
MARTINE. Take a gander at that intellectual, will you: with his idiot Aristotle.
SGANARELLE. For your information, I am an intellectual. Just try to find another woodcutter who knows the things I know, who has my skill at debating, who was chief assistant to a very renowned doctor for six years, and who knew how to speak genuine [genuine] Greece and Latrine before he was six years old.
MARTINE. You're a fool. Piss off!
SGANARELLE. You're an idiot, so piss off yourself!
MARTINE. Curse the hour and the day that I was tricked into saying "I do."
SGANARELLE. Curse that clown of a notary who made me sign the marriage certificate.
MARTINE. How dare you say that when you should be
thanking heaven that you are lucky enough to have a wife like me. Do you really think you deserve to be married to me?

Sganarelle. Deserve you? I should hope not. Let's not start this again. I could tell you a thing or two . . .

Martine. What? What could you tell me?

Sganarelle. Enough; let's let sleeping dogs lie. It's just that we know what we know: namely, that you were very lucky to catch me.

Martine. Where do you get off? Lucky to catch you? You're ruining me. You're a lecher, a loafer who eats everything in the house . . .

Sganarelle. That's a lie. I drink some of it.

Martine. Piece by piece you've been selling everything in the house.

Sganarelle. Ah! Back to nature!

Martine. You even pawned my bed!

Sganarelle. So that you will have the exquisite pleasure of meeting each day sooner.

Martine. You won't be satisfied until you've sold off our last piece of furniture.

Sganarelle. Thus providing us with freedom and flexibility; unencumbering us, as it were.

Martine. You! From morning 'til night you do nothing but gamble and drink.

Sganarelle. To escape from the dull humdrum pressures of every day existence.

Martine. And how do you expect me to keep the family in order while you're out having a good time?

Sganarelle. I put no restrictions on you. You have complete freedom to solve your own problems.

Martine. I have four helpless children on my hands . . .

Sganarelle. Then put them on the floor.

Martine. . . . who are always hungry.

Sganarelle. Spank them: When I am properly wined and
dined I want everyone in my house to get what he deserves.

MARTINE. How long do you think things can go on this way, you souse?

SGANARELLE. My dear wife, please speak more softly.

MARTINE. How long do you think I’m going to put up with your lies and all the rest of your disgusting behavior?

SGANARELLE. Don’t get so excited, my love.

MARTINE. I’ll make a decent man of you yet.

SGANARELLE. Dear wife, you are aware that I am not what you might call a patient soul, and that I have two powerful arms.

MARTINE. I spit on your two powerful arms.

SGANARELLE. My dear little wife, my love; as usual, you’re just itching for a fight.

MARTINE (sarcastically). Ooooo. You frighten me!

SGANARELLE. Darling, you realize that I’m only just barely keeping myself under control.

MARTINE. Do you think you can scare me with all your words?

SGANARELLE. Sweet idol of my marriage vows, I’ll bash your ears in.

MARTINE. Sot!

SGANARELLE. Now you’re really going to get it!

MARTINE. Wino!

SGANARELLE. I’ll give you something you’ll never forget.

MARTINE. Animal!

SGANARELLE. I’ll wallop you good!

MARTINE. Villain, liar, slob, coward, beggar, cheat, sneak, thief, Judas, bully, viper. (SGANARELLE takes a stick and begins to beat her.)

SGANARELLE. What do you say now?

MARTINE. Ah, ooh, ahhh, ohhhh.

SGANARELLE. This should keep you quiet for a while.
SCENE TWO

SCENE: M. ROBERT, MARTINE, SGANARELLE. Outside the house of Sganarelle.

M. ROBERT. Whoa! Hey! What’s going on here? This is disgraceful! The devil take a man who can beat his wife like that. (MARTINE, arms on her hips, forces M. ROBERT backward and finally hits him.)

MARTINE. And just suppose that I want him to beat me?

M. ROBERT. Well, then, he has my whole-hearted approval.

MARTINE. Who asked you to butt in?

M. ROBERT. Nobody.

MARTINE. Is it any of your business?

M. ROBERT. No, absolutely not!

MARTINE. Will you look at this busybody who wants to settle everybody’s fights for them!

M. ROBERT. I apologize.

MARTINE. Does it have anything to do with you?

M. ROBERT. Nothing whatever!

MARTINE. Do you have any reason to stick your nose into our squabbles?

M. ROBERT. None whatsoever.

MARTINE. Then mind your own business.

M. ROBERT. I won’t say another word.

MARTINE. I enjoy being beaten.

M. ROBERT. Fine!

MARTINE. It doesn’t hurt you, does it?

M. ROBERT. Not in the least!
MARTINE. Then you’re an idiot to meddle with things that aren’t any of your concern. (She hits M. ROBERT, who turns around only to bump into SGANARELLE, who also hits him and chases him right back toward MARTINE.)

M. ROBERT. Neighbor, I beg . . . that is . . . I plead your pardon. Beat your wife all you want. If you want me to, I’ll even help you.

SGANARELLE. No, thank you.

M. ROBERT. Ah, well, then go on and beat her by yourself.

SGANARELLE. I’ll beat her if I feel like it, and if I don’t feel like it, I won’t beat her.

M. ROBERT. Fine!

SGANARELLE. She’s my wife, not your wife.

M. ROBERT. No question about that.

SGANARELLE. So you’d better not try to boss me around.

M. ROBERT. Right!

SGANARELLE. I don’t need your help.

M. ROBERT. Absolutely!

SGANARELLE. And, I must say, it’s pretty pushy of you to go around meddling in other people’s lives. Remember the words of Cicero: “Put not the bark twixt thy finger and the tree.” (He chases M. ROBERT off, returns to MARTINE and takes her hand.) Well, now. Let’s have a truce. Agreed?

MARTINE. Are you kidding? After a beating like that?

SGANARELLE. Come on, let’s not make a fuss about it.

Shake on it.

MARTINE. I don’t want to.

SGANARELLE. Eh!

MARTINE. No!

SGANARELLE. My sweet little wife.

MARTINE. No!

SGANARELLE. Come on.

MARTINE. I’ll do nothing of the sort.

SGANARELLE. Now, you don’t want to hold a grudge.
MARTINE. I want to be angry.
SGANARELLE. Come on, let’s not make a mountain out of a molehill.
MARTINE. Buzz off.
SGANARELLE. Shake hands, I said.
MARTINE. Not after what you did to me.
SGANARELLE. All right then, I’m sorry. Give me your hand.
MARTINE. I forgive you. (Aside.) But I’ll make you pay for this.
SGANARELLE. It’s just plain silly to take this little matter so seriously. Such trifles are necessary to the fulfillment of a true and lasting relationship. And five or six good whacks with a stick, between people whose love for one another is as strong as ours is, redoubles and recharges that affection. Now I’m going to chop some wood and I solemnly promise to bring back enough for three years. (He goes off.)

**SCENE THREE**

SCENE: MARTINE, alone. Outside the house of Sganarelle.

MARTINE (pacing about). No matter how hard I try, I’m still angry! I swear that I’ll find a way to pay you back for the beating you gave me. Of course, there’s always the obvious way that a woman can take revenge on her husband; but that’s not quite what I had in mind for that worm. I want to do him one better. I want to pay him back — double.
SCENE FOUR

SCENE: VALERE, LUCAS, MARTINE. Outside the house of Sganarelle.

LUCAS. Son of a gun! We’ve sure been handed one devil of a job. I don’t have no idea what we’re gonna do.

VALERE. Well, I know that we’d better obey our master. Besides, there’s more to this job than meets the eye. If we can help the master cure his daughter, there’s no question that we’ll get a little bonus after she gets married — and she can’t be married until she’s been cured. Her suitor, old Horace, knows that his bread’s buttered on our side of the slice. No question but that he’ll take good care of us after he gets what he wants. He’s very generous. All the more so because it’s known that she would rather marry Leandre, but that doesn’t matter at all. It’s Horace her father wants and it’s Horace his daughter will get. Her father would never let her marry Leandre.

MARTINE (thinking aloud to herself). How can I get back at him?

LUCAS. The master is just dreamin’. How kin we help when all the doctors what can speak the classies, with all their rare medicinmons, haven’t done nothing?

VALERE. If one looks, one sometimes finds that the problems of the wise can often be solved by the simple, direct approach of the plain, common man.

MARTINE. I can’t stand it any more! I’ve got to get my revenge now! I ache all over from the beating. (She is
so absorbed with her own thoughts that she does not notice VALERE and LUCAS and bumps into them.) Ah! Gentlemen, excuse me. I didn’t see you. I’m afraid that I’m all wrapped up in my problems.

VALERE. I understand. After all, everyone has problems. In fact, we’re partly to blame. We’re also trying to solve a problem.

MARTINE. If you think I might be of help, please let me know.

VALERE. Well, I guess there’s no harm in asking you. We’ve been looking for a very special kind of a man, a very particular sort of doctor, who could discover the secret of the illness of our master’s daughter, and cure her. In some very strange and frightening way, she has lost her ability to speak. Several doctors have already tried all their arts but they have failed. We believe that out here in the country there are people who understand things unknown to the rest of the world, and these simple people with their special skills can succeed where the learned doctors have failed. We hope to find this kind of person.

MARTINE (aside). Heaven has given me this chance to get back at my louse of a husband. (To VALERE and LUCAS.) What a coincidence! I’m intimately acquainted with just the sort of man you’re looking for. He has amazing skill with the kind of unusual case you’ve been describing.

VALERE. Please, tell us where we might find him.

MARTINE. You’ll find him over there in that clump of trees. His hobby is cutting down trees.

LUCAS. A physisherman whose hobby is cutting down trees!

VALERE. I’m sure the lady means to say that he’s out gathering herbs. Don’t you?

MARTINE. No. He’s really a very strange sort of man. He’s got all sorts of weird habits and ways of doing things. In fact, if you didn’t know what he was you’d never be
able to guess it by looking at him or talking with him. For some reason, he dresses in old clothes and pretends to be stupid. He doesn’t like to share his knowledge and he hates to use the marvelous medical skills that heaven has granted him.

VALERE. I have noticed this kind of thing before. Great wisdom seems to move hand-in-hand with great eccentricity.

MARTINE. But this man is more peculiar than most peculiar people. Sometimes he actually has to be beaten before he’ll admit that he’s really a doctor. When he’s in that kind of mood you just have to take a stick and beat the living daylights out of him until he’s finally willing to share his knowledge. What I mean to say is that if you have to beat him, you have to beat him. All of us around here have just gotten used to it. When you really need him you have to beat him.

VALERE. What a strange story.

MARTINE. It’s true, though, and he’s really capable of absolutely anything!

VALERE. What’s his name?

MARTINE. His name’s Sganarelle, and it’s easy to recognize him. He has a large black beard and he’s wearing green and yellow clothes and a ruffled collar with a little black cap. He looks just like a peasant.

LUCAS. He looks like a pheasant! This bird sounds like one strange doctor.

VALERE. I don’t care what he looks like. Is he really as marvelous as you say he is?

MARTINE. Are you serious? He can work miracles. About six months ago there was this woman whose case looked hopeless — or so all the doctors said. Six hours after she had supposedly died — they were getting her ready for the funeral — they kidnapped this man we’ve been talking about and brought him to her bedside. He put a little drop of something or other in her mouth and — bingo! She sat
up in bed and began to walk around the room as though nothing had happened.

LUCAS. Ah!

VALERE. It must have been some specially prepared liquid gold.

MARTINE. Probably, probably. But that’s not all. Three weeks ago a twelve-year-old boy fell from the church steeple. He landed in the road, cracked his skull and broke his arms and legs. Well – to make a long story short – they brought in this same fellow, who rubbed the boy’s body with some kind of ointment that he knows how to make and right away the boy jumped up and ran off to play with his friends!

LUCAS. A-ha!

VALERE. It’s obvious that this man knows all the secrets of medicine.

MARTINE. That’s for sure!

LUCAS. That’s the kind of man we’re looking for, all right! Let’s go find him.

VALERE. We are very much obliged to you, madame.

MARTINE. But don’t forget my warning about him. (She exits.)

LUCAS. Oh, he’ll help us, all right. If we have to, we’ll beat the help out of him.

VALERE. We were very lucky to have met that woman. In my opinion, the success of our mission is only just around the corner. (Lights dim.)