

THE RIDICULOUS MERCHANT. A COMIC OPERA

JEAN-FRANCOIS REGNARD

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JEAN-FRANCOIS REGNARD

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED By FRANK J. MORLOCK C 2002

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Etext by Dagny

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CHARACTERS

THE MARQUIS

POLICHINELLE, his valet

JANBROCHE, a draper

MISS JANBROCHE, his daughter

PIERROT, Janbroche's valet

THE COLLEAGUE

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JANBROCHE: (to Colleague) Sir, I am your servant. Could you do me a pleasure?

COLLEAGUE: What pleasure do you want from me?

JANBROCHE: I really want to beg you to take care of my shop, and especially my daughter.

COLLEAGUE: Sir, for such a difficulty, I don't care; but you have your servant Pierrot who will do your business.

JANBROCHE: Indeed, you are not very complaisant. I am going to call my servant. Pierrot, hola, Pierrot!
(The Colleague leaves, Pierrot enters.)

PIERROT: Sir, what, what's to be done for your service?

JANBROCHE: You must stand in for me, and be the steward of my house.

PIERROT: My word, sir, I cannot serve as the column of your building.

JANBROCHE: It's to take care of my shop and to have special care of my daughter.

PIERROT: My word, sir, I would really like to take care of your shop, but not your daughter, because she's merchandise like water of the Queen of Hungary, as soon as you allow it go flat the savor goes, a daughter is the same. So, sir, you can keep her yourself.

JANBROCHE: Go, go, scoundrel that you are, go tell my daughter to come speak to me.

PIERROT Sir, I am going instantly.

(Exit Pierrot, enter Miss Janbroche.)

MISS JANBROCHE: What do you want, my dear father?

JANBROCHE: Daughter, come close when I speak to you; I am going to leave to go purchase some drapes that I need, and I want nothing to be sold in my shop during my absence.

MISS JANBROCHE: That would seem completely ridiculous.

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JANBROCHE: It's because of that that I am called, The Ridiculous Merchant.

MISS JANBROCHE: But, my dear father, in what manner do you want me to dismiss the merchants.

JANBROCHE: Daughter, when some merchant comes to you, to ask for drapes, and says to you: Miss, don't you have a fine Holland drape to sell me? He must be replied to: Truly, not at all, sir. In that way you will keep your honor and your reputation.

MISS JANBROCHE: That suffices, my dear father, I won't fail to do it.

JANBROCHE: Goodbye, my little girl.

MISS JANBROCHE: Goodbye, my dear papa.

(Janbroche leaves, as does his daughter. After a short pause The Marquis and Polichinelle enter.)

MARQUIS: Tell me, rogue, how long have I been looking for you and where have you been?

POLICHINELLE: My word, sir, I was making some verse in the water– closet.

MARQUIS: What, impertinent. Is that a place to make verse?

POLICHINELLE: Why, sir, everybody does it where he can. What do you want with me?

MARQUIS: You must go right away on my behalf to the home of Mr. Janbroche, my customary supplier, to find me a complete outfit for a gentleman.

POLICHINELLE: But, sir, without being too curious, for what purpose?

MARQUIS: It's because I'm on the point of getting married.

POLICHINELLE: Why, sir, why don't you put yourself in lace? That's better suited than stitching point.

MARQUIS: Animal that you are, that's not it; I mean to take a wife.

POLICHINELLE: Ah! Sir, I hear you: is it because you know I need a wife, you are taking one for yourself and me as well?

MARQUIS: Impertinent, that you are: know that I am taking a wife, that's not for an impertinent like you, and she's for me.

POLICHINELLE: Well, sir, if in any case she gets lost, you can search for her all alone.

MARQUIS: Yeah, yeah, not so much verbiage, do my errand as quickly as possible.

POLICHINELLE: But, sir, where's he live?

MARQUIS: Heavens, there's the door. March.

POLICHINELLE: That's fine, sir, I'm going there. (to Colleague) Go, go, Colleague. I'm really going to shoe a mule.

COLLEAGUE: But why do you want to shoe a mule? They didn't give you the money.

POLICHINELLE: You are right again, I'm going to call him. (running after the Marquis) Sir, sir, you didn't give me any money.

MARQUIS: Go on, go on, he's my customary merchant, I only pay him annually.

POLICHINELLE: Right. Now that's not bad for us; I was counting on shoeing a mule, and I won't shoe just one. (raps on Janbroche's door)

(Exit the Marquis.)

POLICHINELLE: Mr. Janbroche, I am your servant.

COLLEAGUE: Impertinent that you are, don't you see that it's Miss, his daughter?

POLICHINELLE: Well I—I prefer to kiss the daughter to the father. Miss, have you drapes from Holland?

MISS JANBROCHE: Truly, not at all, sir.

*** Polichinelle continues to ask Miss Janbroche for several sorts of drapes, and she continues to reply: Truly, not at all, sir . ***

(A footnote says: We thought we were duty bound to suppress some lines of dialogue because of their triviality.)

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(Janbroche returns from his trip and asks the Colleague what has happened during his absence.)

COLLEAGUE: My, word, sir, I don't know a thing, and moreover you can call your servant Pierrot.

JANBROCHE: Pierrot!

PIERROT: (entering) Sir, since I saw you last there's been a lot of news.

JANBROCHE: What news?

PIERROT: The males are sleeping with the females.

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JANBROCHE: Beast that you are, that's been happening all the time and will continue to happen.

PIERROT: Well, sir, since it has to be, I am telling you, there's a big fat boy sleeping with your daughter.

JANBROCHE: (wanting to strike Pierrot) What! a boy sleeping with my daughter! Now I'm going to lose honor and reputation.

PIERROT: Why, sir—why, sir—let youth divert itself.

(Janbroche enters the house and chases Polichinelle who appears in his underwear.)

POLICHINELLE: (coming out of the house) But, sir, give me back my breeches.

JANBROCHE: (pushing Polichinelle and striking him with a stick) Wait, here's your breeches.

MARQUIS: (entering with Colleague) Sir, tell me a little, haven't you seen my rogue of a servant?

POLICHINELLE: Sir, here I am.

(The Marquis, seeing Polichinelle in his underwear, draws his sword with the intent of running him through.)

POLICHINELLE: (on his knees) Ah! Sir, if you're going to smash the mustard pot, it's going to squirt in your eyes.

MARQUIS: Wretch, whose outfit are you wearing?

POLICHINELLE: While I was going to bathe, sir, some little thieves stole my breeches.

MARQUIS: Scoundrel, if you don't tell me the truth, I am going to beat you unmercifully with blows from a stick, instantly.

POLICHINELLE: Sir, wait, don't put yourself in a rage. I am going to tell you the truth; as the daughter of Mr. Janbroche was afraid, she begged me to go to bed with her, and me, very obliging as I am, I couldn't refuse her.

MARQUIS: Go, go, you are a wretch; you've got to marry her.

POLICHINELLE: Right, right, so much the better, now here's my business.

(They return Polichinelle's clothes, and male and female dancers celebrate the wedding.)

CURTAIN