

BEAUMARCHAIS

The Barber of Seville
and
The Marriage of Figaro

Translated with an Introduction by
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PENGUIN BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

Beaumarchais in English

As has been mentioned earlier, no time was lost in publishing translations or adaptations of the plays in English. *Eugénie* appeared in English as *The School for Rakes*, translated by Elizabeth Griffith, in 1769. *Les Deux Amis ou le négociant de Lyons*, translated by 'C.H.', was published as *The Liverpool Merchant* in 1800 and was considered sufficiently important to appear in Bell's compendium, *The London Stage*. Elizabeth Griffith's translation of *The Barber* was published in 1776 and there were several reissues before the end of the century, but it was not until 1905 that a second translation was published, that of Myrick (Dent, Temple Dramatists). A new edition appeared in 1949. Samuel French (New York) published a translation by Stewart Robb in 1939. *The Marriage of Figaro* appeared very promptly in Holcroft's adaptation - published in 1785. A second version translated or adapted by Bishop was published in 1809. There appears to have been no other translation published in England.

Biographies of Beaumarchais in English are few, and none does full justice to his character and career. Still less is there any critical appreciation of his plays. The best account of his life is given in Elizabeth Kite's *Beaumarchais and the War of American Independence*. Rivers's *Figaro - the Life of Beaumarchais* (London, 1922) is readable and useful. Another full-length account of Beaumarchais in English, presumably a translation though not so described, is Frischauer's *Beaumarchais - an Adventurer in a Century of Women* (London, 1936). It is very much what its title would suggest. Recently Cynthia Cox's *The Real Figaro* has appeared (Longmans, 1962). It gives a clear and complete account of the main facts of Beaumarchais's life and career, but the thorough critical biography in English remains to be written.

1962

J. W.

The Barber of Seville

OR

The Futile Precaution

CHARACTERS

COUNT ALMAVIVA, a Spanish grandee, in love with Rosine

FIGARO, barber of Seville

ROSINE, a young lady of noble birth, ward of Bartholo

BARTHOLO, physician and Rosine's guardian

BAZILE, organist and music master to Rosine

WAKEFUL [L'ÉVEILLÉ], servant of Bartholo, a dull sleepy boy

YOUTHFUL [LA JEUNESSE], an elderly servant of Bartholo

A notary

An alcalde

Alguazils and servants

SCENE: *Seville, first outside Bartholo's house beneath Rosine's window, and thereafter inside.*

ACT ONE

[COUNT ALMAVIVA *alone, wearing a wide brown cloak, his hat brim turned down. He takes out his watch as he walks up and down.*]

COUNT ALMAVIVA: Not so late as I thought. It's still not quite her usual time for appearing at the lattice. No matter! Better arrive too early than miss the one moment for seeing her. If any of my acquaintance at Court were to spy me now, a hundred leagues from Madrid and hanging about every morning under the windows of a woman I've never even spoken to . . . they'd take me for a Spaniard of Isabella's time. . . . And why not? We all run after happiness, and mine lies in Rosine's affection. But fancy following a woman to Seville when Madrid and the Court offer such a variety of easily won pleasures! That's just what I'm trying to get away from. I'm weary of the conquests that self-interest or habit or vanity present us in unending succession. How delightful it would be to be loved for oneself alone! If only I could feel certain that in this disguise . . . Oh, the Devil take the fellow! What does he want coming just now?

[*The COUNT withdraws as FIGARO enters, a guitar slung over his shoulder. He is humming cheerfully, pencil and paper in hand.*]

FIGARO [*breaking into song*]:

Begone dull care
That ever art
Man's years and happiness consuming.
Come wine, good wine,
That ever doth
Man's heart illumine.

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Not bad so far, eh?

That ever doth
Man's heart illumine.
Let wine and leisure
Dispute my heart. . . .

No, no, there's no dispute. They are equally at home there.

Divide my heart and pleasure.

Can one say divide? Oh, Lord, yes! Our good friends who write comic operas don't worry about details like that. Anything that isn't worth saying – they sing nowadays!

Let wine and leisure
Divide my heart and pleasure. . . .

I would like to finish up with something witty and sparkling . . . something that sounds really original. [*He goes down on one knee and writes as he sings.*]

I'll love the one and be happy with the other . . .

Oh dear! That's flat! It isn't . . . I need more contrast – an antithesis!

The one I'll serve, the other shall serve me
And so I'll be
Serving and served in equal measure.

By Jove! That's got it!

The one I'll serve, the other shall serve me
And so I'll be
Serving and served in equal measure.

Well done, Figaro!

[*Singing as he writes:*]

Let wine and leisure
Divide my heart and pleasure.
The one I'll serve – the other shall serve me
And so I'll be
Serving and served in equal measure
Serving and served in equal measure.

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Ha, ha! When there's an accompaniment to it we shall see, you gentlemen who decide whether a play succeeds or not, we'll see if I don't know what I'm talking about! [*Noticing the Count*] I've seen that priest before somewhere. [*Rises to his feet.*]

THE COUNT [*aside*]: I seem to know this fellow.

FIGARO [*aside*]: No. He's no priest. That proud and noble bearing . . .

THE COUNT [*aside*]: That grotesque appearance . . .

FIGARO: I'm *not* mistaken. It's Count Almaviva.

THE COUNT: I do believe it's that rascal Figaro.

FIGARO: Himself. My Lord!

THE COUNT: Miserable scoundrel! If you utter a single word . . .

FIGARO: Yes, I recognize you – and the familiar epithets you always condescended to bestow upon me.

THE COUNT: I shouldn't have recognized *you*. You are so fat and sleek. . . .

FIGARO: Well, what do you expect, Sir – it's poverty.

THE COUNT: Poor fellow! But what are you doing in Seville? Didn't I recommend you for a job in a government office?

FIGARO: Yes, and I got it, My Lord, and very grateful I was too.

THE COUNT: Call me Lindor. Don't you see [*indicates his disguise*] that I want to conceal my identity?

FIGARO: I'll be off, then.

THE COUNT: On the contrary. I'm waiting for something here, and two people in conversation are less likely to provoke notice than one walking up and down by himself. Let us appear to be gossiping. Well now, about the job?

FIGARO: On the strength of Your Excellency's recommendation the Minister promptly appointed me to a post as apprentice apothecary.

THE COUNT: What! With an army doctor?

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FIGARO: No, with a horse doctor. I was sent to a stud farm in Andalusia.

THE COUNT [*laughing*]: An excellent beginning!

FIGARO: It wasn't a bad job. I was in charge of the drugs and the dressings, so I was able to sell people the medicines intended for the horses.

THE COUNT: And so kill off His Majesty's subjects?

FIGARO: Well now – no remedy is infallible – but they did sometimes cure Galicians, Catalans, and Auvergnats . . .

THE COUNT: Then why did you give it up?

FIGARO: Give it up? It gave me up! Someone reported me to the powers that be. . . .

'Pale Envy, she whose clawlike hands . . .'

THE COUNT: Oh, steady on! Do you mean to say you write poetry as well? I noticed you scribbling on your knee as you were singing just now.

FIGARO: That was the very cause of my misfortune, Your Excellency. When it came to the ears of the Minister that I was in the habit of turning out complimentary verses – and very neat they were too, I may say – that I contributed acrostics to the newspapers, and that there were other little trifles of mine going the rounds – in a word, when he learned that I actually appeared in print, he took a very serious view of it and had me sacked out of hand on the pretext that a love of letters was incompatible with ability for business.

THE COUNT: There's something in that. But didn't you make representations to him?

FIGARO: No, I felt I was lucky to hear no more of it – knowing as I did that a great man is doing you pretty well if he's doing you no harm.

THE COUNT: You aren't telling the whole story. I seem to remember that you were a pretty disreputable specimen when you were with me.

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FIGARO: Good Heavens, Your Excellency, aren't the poor to be allowed any faults?

THE COUNT: Idle, dissolute . . .

FIGARO: On the basis of the virtues commonly required in a servant does Your Excellency know many masters who would pass muster as valets?

THE COUNT [*laughing*]: Not bad! So you decided to settle down here?

FIGARO: Not immediately . . .

THE COUNT [*interrupting*]: Just a moment . . . I thought there was someone. . . . Go on, tell me the rest.

FIGARO: Back in Madrid I decided to try my literary abilities again. As the theatre seemed to offer a suitable field . . .

THE COUNT: Good Lord!

[*While FIGARO goes on talking, the COUNT keeps his eyes on the lattice.*]

FIGARO: I really can't understand why I wasn't successful. I filled the pit with a most industrious collection of people. They made good use of their hands and their clappers! I barred canes and gauntlets – anything that didn't provide a loud enough applause! And I'm bound to say that the coffee houses seemed to be well disposed towards me – but it was the *critics* who . . .

THE COUNT: Oh, the critics! Typical disappointed author!

FIGARO: Yes, we are all alike, and why not? They gave me the bird, but if ever I can get them together again I . . .

THE COUNT: You'll bore them to death in revenge, eh?

FIGARO: I have it in for them, by Gad!

THE COUNT: You have, have you? But don't you know that they only allow a condemned man twenty-four hours for cursing his judges?

FIGARO: You get twenty-four years in the theatre – a lifetime's too short to exhaust a resentment like mine.

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THE COUNT: I like to see you letting yourself go, but you didn't say what made you leave Madrid.

FIGARO: It must have been my good angel, Your Excellency, since I've been so fortunate as to meet my old master again! I realized in Madrid that the so-called Republic of Letters is nothing but a pack of wolves – all constantly at odds with the others. Given over as they are to the mutual hatreds which spring from their ridiculous rivalries, all the various insects, flies, gnats, midges, critics, envious journalists, booksellers, publishers, the whole swarm of parasites attach themselves to the skin of the unfortunate man of letters and succeed in the end in sucking out of him what little bit of life and blood remain to him. So, weary of writing, bored with myself, and disgusted with my fellows, up to the ears in debt and without a penny to my name, convinced at last that the humble rewards of the razor were preferable to the empty honours of the pen, I left Madrid and, with my pack on my back, made my way, philosophically enough, through the two Castiles, La Mancha, Estremadura, Sierra Morena, and Andalusia, welcomed in one place and jailed in the next, but always superior to fortune, praised by some and condemned by others, in fair weather and foul, defying all enemies, laughing at my own misfortunes, and playing the barber to anyone who needed me – here you find me at last established in Seville and at Your Excellency's disposal for any duties for which you care to command me.

THE COUNT: And what taught you such a cheerful philosophy?

FIGARO: Habitual misfortune. I forced myself to laugh at everything for fear of having to weep. What do you keep looking over there for?

THE COUNT: We must hide.

FIGARO: But why?

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THE COUNT: Come along, you wretch. You'll ruin everything for me.

[*They hide. The lattice on the first floor opens and BARTHOLO and ROSINE appear at the window.*]

ROSINE: How pleasant to breathe the fresh air. This lattice is so seldom open. . . .

BARTHOLO: What's the paper you have there?

ROSINE: Some lines from *The Futile Precaution* which my music master gave me yesterday.

BARTHOLO: And what is *The Futile Precaution*?

ROSINE: A new play.

BARTHOLO: Another drama I suppose! Some new sort of silliness!*

ROSINE: Oh, I know nothing about that.

BARTHOLO: Well, well! The newspapers and the authorities will deal with it for us. What a barbarous age!

ROSINE: You are always blaming the age we live in.

BARTHOLO: Forgive me the liberty! What has it produced that we should praise it? Nonsense of every kind! Liberty of thought, the Force of Gravity, Electricity and Magnetism, universal toleration, inoculation, quinine, the Encyclopedia, and the new-fangled Drama!

[*The paper slips from ROSINE'S hand and falls into the road.*]

ROSINE: Oh! My song! My song! It dropped down there while I was listening to you. Run down at once, Sir, or I shall lose my song.

BARTHOLO: Why the deuce can't folks stick to things when they've got 'em. [*Leaves balcony.*]

ROSINE [*looking down and signalling*]: Sst!

[*The COUNT appears.*]

Pick it up and get out of sight.

* *Note by Beaumarchais*: Bartholo didn't like dramas. Perhaps he had written a tragedy in his youth.

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[The COUNT springs forward, picks up the paper, and returns to his hiding-place.]

BARTHOLO [coming out at the street door]: Where is it? I can't see anything.

ROSINE: Under the balcony. By the wall.

BARTHOLO: A nice sort of job you've given me! Has anyone come past?

ROSINE: I haven't seen anyone.

BARTHOLO [to himself]: And I was silly enough to come and look for it! Bartholo, my lad, you are a simpleton. This will teach you never to open a lattice that gives on to the street. [He goes into the house again.]

ROSINE [still on the balcony]: My unhappiness is my excuse. Alone, confined to the house, subject to the persecution of a man I hate, am I to blame if I endeavour to escape from slavery?

BARTHOLO [reappearing on the balcony]: Go inside again, Signora. It's my fault if you've lost your music, but it's a misfortune that shan't occur again. I promise you.

[He fastens the shutters. The COUNT and FIGARO re-enter cautiously.]

THE COUNT: Now that they have gone in we'll have a look at this mysterious song. There's certainly something queer about it. Why! It's a letter!

FIGARO: And he wanted to know what *The Futile Precaution* was!

THE COUNT [reading excitedly]: 'Your devotion arouses my interest. As soon as my guardian has left the house sing something or other to this tune – something which will reveal to me the name, estate, and intentions of one who seems to display such constancy in his attachment to the unfortunate Rosine.'

FIGARO [imitating Rosine]: My song! My song! It's dropped down there. Oh, run down, Sir, run down. [He laughs.] Oh,

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these women! If you want to see how clever the most artless of women can become – try locking them up!

THE COUNT: My dearest Rosine!

FIGARO: No further need to worry about what you are doing here in disguise. There's love-making in prospect.

THE COUNT: Yes, you know now, but if you gossip . . .

FIGARO: Gossip? Me? I won't waste any of the much-abused and high-sounding phrases about honour and devotion upon you. I can put the position in two words: self-interest. Self-interest will answer for me. Use that as your yardstick and . . .

THE COUNT: Very well. Let me tell you then that six months ago I met by chance on the Prado a young lady . . . as beautiful as . . . but then you've just seen her! I searched the length and breadth of Madrid for her, but in vain. It wasn't until a few days ago that I found that her name is Rosine, that she's of noble birth, an orphan, and married to an elderly doctor called Bartholo, who lives in this very town.

FIGARO: A pretty little bird, I agree. She'll take some flushing! But, who told you she was the doctor's wife?

THE COUNT: Everybody says so.

FIGARO: That's a tale he has made up since he came back from Madrid to put young men off the scent. As yet she's only his ward, but it won't be long before . . .

THE COUNT: Never! But that's good news indeed! I was determined to go to any lengths to condole with her. Now I find that she's free after all! There isn't a moment to lose. I must win her love and frustrate this base alliance that he's planning for her. Do you know him, this guardian of hers?

FIGARO: As well as my own mother.

THE COUNT: What sort of a man is he?

FIGARO [rattling it off quickly]: Oh, he's a stoutish, shortish, oldish, greyish, cunning, smarmy, posing, nosing, peeping, prying, creeping, whining, snivelling sort of man.

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THE COUNT [*impatiently*]: All right, I've seen him. I mean his character. . . .

FIGARO: Coarse, mean, infatuated with his ward, jealous beyond all measure where she's concerned, and she hates him like poison.

THE COUNT: And his likeable qualities?

FIGARO: He hasn't any!

THE COUNT: So much the better. Is he honest?

FIGARO: Just enough to avoid being hanged.

THE COUNT: Better still. To punish a rogue and at the same time achieve one's own happiness . . .

FIGARO: Is to combine public interest and private advantage! Truly a master stroke of morality, My Lord!

THE COUNT: You say that it's fear of young men that makes him lock his doors?

FIGARO: Yes, to everyone - without exception. If he could wall her up or brick her up he would do so.

THE COUNT: Ah! The Devil! That's not so good. Could you by any chance get access to the house?

FIGARO: Could I? In the first place the house I'm living in belongs to the worthy Doctor and he lodges me *gratis*.

THE COUNT: Ha! Ha!

FIGARO: And I in return promise him six gold pistoles a year - also *gratis*.

THE COUNT [*impatiently*]: You are his tenant?

FIGARO: And what's more his barber, his surgeon, his apothecary. There's never a scrape of a razor or probe of a lancet or a squirt of syringe in his household except at the hands of yours truly.

THE COUNT [*embracing him*]: Ah! Figaro! My friend! You shall be my guardian angel, my liberator, my guiding spirit.

FIGARO: Plague on it! How friendly people do become when they find they've a use for you. Talk about excitable fellows!

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THE COUNT: Ah! Happy Figaro! You are going to see my Rosine! You'll actually see her. Think how lucky you are!

FIGARO: Oh, yes, that's how all lovers talk! Am I supposed to adore her as well? I only wish you could take my place.

THE COUNT: Oh, if only one could get past the guard!

FIGARO: That's just what I was thinking about.

THE COUNT: If only for a few hours. . . .

FIGARO: Give people problems of their own to think about and you prevent them from interfering with others.

THE COUNT: Yes, but what has that to do with it?

FIGARO [*pondering*]: I'm just wondering whether my knowledge of pharmacy wouldn't provide some means of . . .

THE COUNT: Villain!

FIGARO: I'm not going to hurt them, am I? They all need my ministrations. It's just a question of dosing them all at one and the same time.

THE COUNT: Surely the doctor would suspect something?

FIGARO: We must act so quickly that there'll be no time for suspicion to arise. I've got an idea: the Royal Infante's Regiment is coming to the town.

THE COUNT: The Colonel's a friend of mine.

FIGARO: Good. Present yourself at the Doctor's house in trooper's uniform with a billeting notice. He'll have to take you in, and you can leave the rest to me.

THE COUNT: Excellent!

FIGARO: It wouldn't be a bad thing if you pretended to be half-seas over. . . .

THE COUNT: What for?

FIGARO: And under a guise of being fuddled led him on a bit. . . .

THE COUNT: Why?

FIGARO: So that he wouldn't take umbrage and would think that you were more interested in sleep than in carrying on an intrigue under his roof.

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THE COUNT: A very proper notion. But aren't you going to be there yourself?

FIGARO: Me? Oh, yes, of course, but we shall be pretty lucky if he doesn't guess who you are, even though he's never seen you before. Then how should we get you in afterwards?

THE COUNT: You are right there.

FIGARO: The fact is that you mayn't be able to act the part - it's difficult. A soldier - drunk . . .

THE COUNT: What do you take me for? [*Puts on a drunken manner.*] Is this the house of Doctor Bartholo, friend?

FIGARO: Not bad, I admit. A bit more unsteady on your pins though. [*In a more drunken tone*] Is this the housh of . . .

THE COUNT: Oh, come! That's just vulgar drunkenness.

FIGARO: It's the right sort. It's the enjoyable sort.

THE COUNT: The door's opening.

FIGARO: Here he comes. We'll withdraw until he's gone.

[*They conceal themselves.*]

BARTHOLO [*talking to someone inside as he comes out*]: I'll be back in a minute. Don't let anyone come in. What a fool I was to come down. I ought to have suspected something as soon as she asked me . . . and Bazile's not back yet. He was to make all arrangements for us to be married in secret tomorrow. Still no news at all! I must go see what's keeping him. [*Exit.*]

THE COUNT: What's that I heard? He's marrying Rosine in secret tomorrow!

FIGARO: Difficulties only add spice to the undertaking, My Lord!

THE COUNT: Who's this Bazile? What has he to do with the marriage?

FIGARO: He's a poor devil who teaches Bartholo's ward music. He's infatuated with his art, an accessory in knavery, needy, ready to grovel for half a crown. There'll be no diffi-

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culty in dealing with him, My Lord! [*Looking at the balcony*] There we go! Look!

THE COUNT: Who is it?

FIGARO: There, behind the lattice. Don't look now! Don't look!

THE COUNT: Why?

FIGARO: Didn't the note tell you to sing something or other? Go on. Sing as if you were singing . . . just for the sake of singing. There she is! There she is!

THE COUNT: Since I've aroused her interest without her knowing who I am, we'll keep to the assumed name of Lindor: I shall enjoy my triumph all the more. [*He opens the paper which Rosine threw down.*] But how am I to sing this? I can't make up the words. . . .

FIGARO: Anything that comes into your head will do, My Lord. When it comes to love-making it doesn't matter whether what one says makes sense or it doesn't. Here, take my guitar.

THE COUNT: But what do you expect me to do with it? I play so badly.

FIGARO: Surely there can't be anything a man like you can't make some attempt at! Go on! With the back of your hand. . . . So! *Plan, plan, plan*, you can't sing without a guitar in Seville . . . you would be found out and sent about your business in no time!

[*FIGARO keeps close to the wall under the balcony.*]

THE COUNT [*walking up and down, singing to his own accompaniment*]:

Since you so wish, my name I will reveal

Although unknown I would adore.

Once known what can I hope for more?

But still - my mistress' wish I must obey.

FIGARO [*whispering*]: Very good. Keep it up, My Lord.

THE COUNT [*as before*]:

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I am Lindor, a name
As yet unknown to rank or fame.
Wealth too, alas, I cannot proffer
My love for you is all I have to offer.

FIGARO: Damn it! I couldn't do better myself, and I fancy myself at the game!

THE COUNT [*as before*]:

Tenderly each day I sing
From love for you I hope nothing
Save for a glimpse of those bright eyes
As you, my love, give ear unto my rhapsodies.

FIGARO: Goodness me! For that last bit I can only . . . [*Kisses the hem of his cloak.*]

THE COUNT: Figaro!

FIGARO: Excellency.

THE COUNT: Do you think she heard me?

ROSINE [*singing within the house*]:

All things assure me that I must
My heart to Lindor's care entrust.

[*The noise of a casement being slammed is heard.*]

FIGARO: Now do you think she heard you?

THE COUNT: She closed the window. Someone must have come into the room.

FIGARO: Ah! Poor little thing! How her voice trembled.
She's taken a fancy to you all right, My Lord!

THE COUNT: She used the very method she herself suggested.

'All things assure me that I must
My heart to Lindor's care entrust.'

What grace! What intelligence!

FIGARO: What craft! What cunning love gives 'em!

THE COUNT: Do you think she'll consent to be mine, Figaro?

FIGARO: She'll jump from that balcony rather than fail you.

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THE COUNT: Then it's settled. I'm Rosine's - for life!

FIGARO: You are forgetting, My Lord. She can't hear you now!

THE COUNT: Master Figaro. Just let me tell you this. *She is going to be my wife.* If you help me and conceal my identity . . . you understand . . . you know me sufficiently . . .

FIGARO: Yes, I agree. Come, Figaro, my lad, forward to fortune!

THE COUNT: Let us retire in case we arouse suspicion.

FIGARO [*vigorously*]: Look! I'm going in there - and with one stroke of my wand I'll lull vigilance to sleep, awake the transports of love, thwart the machinations of jealousy, confound base intrigue, and overcome every obstacle that confronts us. As for you, My Lord, to my house, in soldier's uniform with billeting notice in your hand and plenty of gold in your pockets.

THE COUNT: Who's the gold for?

FIGARO: Goodness me! Never mind who it's for! Gold is the sinews of intrigue!

THE COUNT: Don't worry, Figaro. I'll bring plenty.

FIGARO [*going*]: I'll rejoin you shortly.

THE COUNT: Figaro?

FIGARO: What is it?

THE COUNT: What about your guitar?

FIGARO: Fancy my forgetting my guitar! [*Going*] I must be demented!

THE COUNT: And your house? Where d'ye live, you block-head?

FIGARO [*coming back*]: I really must be a bit touched. My shop is only a stone's throw away. Painted blue - leaded windows, barber's pole, and the sign '*Consilio Manuque*' - by Skill and Dexterity - and the name -

FIGARO, FIGARO, FIGARO!

[*Exit.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Rosine's apartment, a casement window upstage – closed by a barred shutter.*

[ROSINE is alone, a candlestick in her hand. She sits down at the table and begins to write.]

ROSINE: Marceline is unwell: all the servants are busy and no one can see that I'm writing. I don't know whether walls have eyes – and ears, or whether my Argus-eyed keeper has some wicked fairy who keeps him informed of everything that happens, but I can't utter a word or move hand or foot without his guessing my intentions at once. . . . Ah, Lindor! [*Sealing the letter*] I'll seal it now though I don't know when or how I shall be able to get it into his hands. I saw him through the casement bars in conversation with Figaro the barber. He's a good fellow and has often shown his sympathy for me. If I could have a word with him for a moment . . .

[Enter FIGARO.]

ROSINE [*startled*]: Ah, Mr Figaro! I am pleased to see you.

FIGARO: I hope I find you well, Madam?

ROSINE: Not very well, Figaro. I'm dying of boredom.

FIGARO: I believe it. You'd need to be dull-witted to thrive on this sort of life.

ROSINE: Who were you having such a lively conversation with out there? Not that I was noticing particularly, but . . .

FIGARO: A young kinsman of mine. A most promising young man, clever, sensitive, talented, and quite attractive to look at.

ROSINE: Very nice, I must say! And his name?

FIGARO: Lindor. He hasn't any money – but he might have found himself a good position if he hadn't left Madrid in a hurry.

ROSINE [*indifferently*]: Oh, he'll find something yet, Figaro, he'll find something! A young man such as you've described can't fail to make a name for himself.

FIGARO [*aside*]: So far, so good! [*To Rosine*] Unfortunately he has one great defect which will always stand in the way of his getting on in the world.

ROSINE: A defect, Figaro? A defect? Are you sure?

FIGARO: He's in love.

ROSINE: In love! You call that a defect?

FIGARO: Of course – considering that he hasn't any money.

ROSINE: Oh, isn't fate unjust? And has he mentioned who it is . . . he's in love with? I'm always inquisitive . . .

FIGARO: You are the last person, Madam, to whom I would wish to make such a disclosure.

ROSINE [*quickly*]: But why, Mr Figaro? I'm very discreet and I'm very much interested in this young man of yours. Do tell me –

FIGARO [*looking slyly at her*]: Then think of the prettiest little creature imaginable, gentle, tender, charming, in fact quite irresistible. So light of foot, so trim of figure, such shapely arms, such rosy lips, such hands, such teeth, such eyes. . . .

ROSINE: And she's here in this town?

FIGARO: In this very quarter.

ROSINE: In this street perhaps?

FIGARO: Nearer than that. . . .

ROSINE: But how charming . . . for this young relation of yours. And the young lady is . . .

FIGARO: Didn't I mention her name?

ROSINE: It's the one thing you've forgotten, Mr Figaro. Do tell me at once. If a certain person were to come into the room I might never know.

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FIGARO: And you really *must* know? Why then . . . the young lady is . . . the ward . . . of your guardian.

ROSINE: The ward of . . . ?

FIGARO: Of Doctor Bartholo. Now you know!

ROSINE [*blushing*]: Ah, Figaro! I don't believe it. I just don't believe it.

FIGARO: He's only longing to come and convince you himself.

ROSINE: You frighten me, Figaro.

FIGARO: Frighten you! Fie! That's quite the wrong attitude. Once give way to fear of the consequences and you begin to experience them. Moreover, I've just got rid of your warders, till tomorrow at any rate.

ROSINE: If he loves me he could prove it by keeping absolutely tranquil and calm.

FIGARO: Ah, Madam! Did you ever know love and tranquillity go together? Youth is so unfortunate today – it's always faced with the same terrible choice: love without tranquillity or tranquillity without love.

ROSINE [*dropping her eyes*]: Tranquillity without love would seem . . .

FIGARO: Ah! Very sad, wouldn't it? In fact, love without tranquillity would seem to be . . . the better alternative and if I were a woman . . .

ROSINE [*with embarrassment*]: It's true that a young lady can't prevent a young man from esteeming her.

FIGARO: And my kinsman has the greatest possible esteem for you.

ROSINE: But if he should commit any imprudence, Mr Figaro, we should be lost.

FIGARO [*aside*]: We should indeed! [*To Rosine*] Perhaps if you were to send him a note – warning him particularly against it . . . a letter can do a great deal.

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ROSINE [*handing him the letter she has just been writing*]: I have no time to write this again, but when you give it him be sure to say . . . [*She listens.*]

FIGARO: Nobody there.

ROSINE: . . . that what I'm doing is only in friendship.

FIGARO: That goes without saying. Good lord, yes! Love would be a different thing altogether.

ROSINE: Only in friendship, you understand? Nothing more. Yet I'm only afraid he may be put off by the difficulties . . . and . . .

FIGARO: Like a will-o'-the-wisp, eh? But remember, Madam, that the same wind which extinguishes a lamp will fan a fire and that we men are like fires. Indeed, I may say that he's in such a state that he's almost inflamed me with his passion – and I'm only an onlooker.

ROSINE: Heavens! I hear my guardian! If he were to find you here! Go through the music-room and down the stairs as quietly as you can.

FIGARO: Don't worry. [*Aside – indicating the letter*] This will have more effect than anything I say. [*He goes out.*]

ROSINE: I shan't have a moment of peace until he's safely outside. I am so fond of dear Figaro. He *is* a nice man – and so good to his relations. Ah! Here comes my tyrant. I'll take up my work again.

[*She puts out the candle, sits down, and picks up her embroidery frame. BARTHOLO enters in a rage.*]

BARTHOLO: Damnation! It's infuriating! That scoundrelly thief of a Figaro! You can't leave the place for a moment but when you get back . . . you can be certain that . . .

ROSINE: Has someone been annoying you, Sir?

BARTHOLO: It's that confounded barber. He's just put the whole household out of action at one swoop. He's given Wakeful a sleeping draught, Youthful a sneezing powder, and he's bled Marceline in her big toe: even my mule – he's

put a poultice on the eyes of the poor blind creature! Because he owes me a hundred crowns he's trying to run up a bill for me! Ah! Let him pay what he owes! There's not a soul about downstairs. Anyone can come up here. It's as open as a barrack square.

ROSINE: But who can get in but you, Sir?

BARTHOLO: I'd rather be alarmed unnecessarily than not take every precaution. There are fellows up to tricks everywhere, the audacious scoundrels! Didn't some rascal nip off with your music only this morning while I was on my way down to get it? Oh! If only I . . .

ROSINE: You take a pleasure in exaggerating things. The wind may have taken it - or some passer-by.

BARTHOLO: Wind, eh? Some passer-by? There wasn't a breath of wind, Miss! Nor passer-by neither. Not a soul! When it comes to picking up paper that a young woman pretends to let fall by accident, it's someone posted there expressly for the purpose!

ROSINE: Pretends to let fall by accident, Sir?

BARTHOLO: Yes, Madam, *pretends!*

ROSINE [*aside*]: The cunning old wretch!

BARTHOLO: Yes, but it won't happen again. I'm going to fasten up this lattice.

ROSINE: Don't stop at that! Wall up the window at the same time! Prison or dungeon - it doesn't make much difference.

BARTHOLO: It wouldn't be a bad idea - those that give on to the street. I suppose that barber hasn't been here by any chance?

ROSINE: Oh! Are you worried about him too?

BARTHOLO: Every man Jack of them - they are all alike.

ROSINE: That's a nice answer, I must say!

BARTHOLO: Ay! Put your confidence in people and you'll soon have your women deceiving you, your best friends

taking advantage of you, and your honest servants aiding and abetting.

ROSINE: What! Don't you even credit me with sufficient principle to resist the seductions of Mr Figaro?

BARTHOLO: Who the Devil can make any sense of women and their fancies? A lot I've seen of these virtuous principles!

ROSINE [*angrily*]: Well, Sir! If you think that any sort of man will please us, how does it come about that I find you so extremely *displeasing*?

BARTHOLO [*taken aback*]: Why? Why? Look here! You never replied to my question about the barber!

ROSINE [*beside herself*]: Very well, then. Yes, he has been here. I *have* seen him. I *have* talked to him. And I don't mind telling you that I found him most kind and helpful. And I hope you choke with your own bad temper! [*She goes out.*]

BARTHOLO [*alone*]: Oh, the infidels! Those dogs of servants! Youthful! Wakeful! Where's that confounded Wakeful?

WAKEFUL [*entering yawning, half asleep*]: Ah! Aaah! [*Yawns.*]

BARTHOLO: Where were you, you stupid fool, when that barber got in here?

WAKEFUL: Master, I was . . . aaah! [*Yawns.*]

BARTHOLO: Up to some sort of scoundrelism no doubt! Didn't you see him?

WAKEFUL: Of course I seen him! Didn't he find I was ill? He said I was and he must have been right, because I began to feel weak in every limb just with listening to him talking! Ah! Ah! Ah!

BARTHOLO [*imitating him*]: Just with listening to him talking! Where's that good-for-nothing Youthful? Giving the lad drugs without a prescription from me! There's some sort of rascality in it somewhere.

[*Enter YOUTHFUL - an old man leaning on his stick. He sneezes several times.*]

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WAKEFUL [*yawning*]: Youthful?

BARTHOLO: Keep your sneezes for another time!

YOUTHFUL: That's more than fifty times . . . fifty times . . . a minute. [*Sneezes.*] I'm all to pieces.

BARTHOLO: Look! I asked you both if somebody had been in to see Rosine? Why didn't you tell me that this barber . . .

WAKEFUL [*yawning*]: Is Mr Figaro somebody? Aah! Cha!

BARTHOLO: I bet the cunning dog has an understanding with her.

YOUTHFUL: I ask you, Master, is it fair, is it right, is it just? [*Sneezes.*]

BARTHOLO: Just? What has justice to do with miserable wretches like you? I'm your master, and what I say must be right.

YOUTHFUL [*sneezing*]: But damme, if a thing's true . . .

BARTHOLO: If a thing's true! If I don't want a thing to be true I take jolly good care that it isn't true. If any sort of rabble are to be allowed to be in the right what's to become of order and discipline?

YOUTHFUL [*sneezing*]: I'd just as soon have my notice. It's a terrible job, this. It's a hell of a life!

WAKEFUL: Decent servants treated like dogs!

BARTHOLO: Out you go then, decent servants! [*Imitates them*] Ercha! Ercha! One sneezes in my face and the other yawns under my very nose!

YOUTHFUL: Ah, Master! I assure you if it weren't for the young lady there would be no staying here at all. [*Goes out sneezing.*]

BARTHOLO: What a state that Figaro has put 'em into! I see what it is. The good-for-nothing wanted to wipe off my hundred crowns without so much as opening his purse.

[*Enter DON BAZILE. FIGARO, hidden in the cabinet, peeps out and listens from time to time.*]

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BARTHOLO: Ah! Don Bazile, you've come to give Rosine her lesson?

BAZILE: There's no particular hurry.

BARTHOLO: I called at your house, but I didn't find you at home.

BAZILE: I was out, on your business. There's some rather bad news.

BARTHOLO: For you?

BAZILE: No, for you. Count Almaviva's in town.

BARTHOLO: Don't talk so loudly. You mean the fellow who was looking all over Madrid for Rosine?

BAZILE: He has taken rooms in the Plaza Major and goes out every day in disguise.

BARTHOLO: That certainly means trouble for me. What's to be done?

BAZILE: If he were an ordinary person we could find some way of dealing with him.

BARTHOLO: Yes. Lie in wait in the dark and . . .

BAZILE: *Bone Deus*. Compromise ourselves? No! Start some nasty rumour - well and good! When it begins to get round, spread the scandal for all that it's worth - *concedo* - that I'd agree to.

BARTHOLO: That's a curious way of getting rid of a man!

BAZILE: Calumny, Sir. You don't realize its effectiveness. I've seen the best of men pretty near overwhelmed by it. Believe me there's no spiteful stupidity, no horror, no absurd story that one can't get the idle-minded folk of a great city to swallow if one goes the right way about it - and we have some experts here! First the merest whisper skimming the earth like a swallow before the storm - *pianissimo* - a murmur and it's away sowing the poisoned seed as it goes. Someone picks it up and - *piano piano* - insinuates it into your ear. The damage is done. It spawns, creeps, and crawls and spreads and multiplies and then -

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rinforzando – from mouth to mouth it goes like the very Devil. Suddenly, no one knows how, you see Calumny raising its head hissing, puffing, and swelling before your very eyes. It takes wing, extending its flight in ever-widening circles, swooping and swirling, drawing in a bit here and a bit there, sweeping everything before it, and breaks forth at last like a thunder clap to become, thanks be to Heaven, the general cry, a public *crescendo*, a chorus universal of hate, rage, and condemnation. Who the deuce can resist it?

BARTHOLO: What *is* this twaddle, Bazile? What have your *piano* and *crescendo* and all that to do with me?

BAZILE: What have they to do with you? What's done everywhere to deal with an enemy we must do here and now to keep yours at a distance.

BARTHOLO: Keep him at a distance? I mean to marry her before she even knows the fellow exists.

BAZILE: In that case you haven't a minute to lose.

BARTHOLO: And whose fault is that? Haven't I put you in charge of the arrangements?

BAZILE: Yes, but you've skimped the expenses! Things like an unequal marriage, an iniquitous verdict, a miscarriage of justice are dissonances within the ordered harmony of things: they need to be resolved by the harmonizing influence of gold.

BARTHOLO [*giving him money*]: I suppose you must have it your own way. But let us get on with it.

BAZILE: That's something like talking. Tomorrow everything shall be completed. You must make sure that no one tips her a warning today.

BARTHOLO: Leave that to me. Will you be back here this evening?

BAZILE: Don't count on it. Arrangements for the marriage will keep me busy all day. Don't count on it.

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BARTHOLO [*going with him to the door*]: Allow me.

BAZILE: Don't trouble, Doctor, don't trouble.

BARTHOLO: No trouble at all. I want to lock the street door when you have gone.

[*They go. FIGARO comes out of the closet.*]

FIGARO: O wise precaution! Lock the street door! And I'll go and *unlock* it for the Count as I go. What a scoundrel he is, this Bazile! Fortunately he's an even bigger fool. You need position in the world, family name, rank, standing in fact, to achieve anything effective by Calumny. A fellow like Bazile could lie to his heart's content – no one would believe him.

ROSINE [*running out*]: What! Are you still here, Figaro?

FIGARO: Very fortunately for you, Miss. Your guardian and your singing master thought they were alone. They have just been speaking their minds. . . .

ROSINE: And you have been listening, Figaro? But don't you know that's very wrong?

FIGARO: Listening? You *have* to if you want to know what's going on. Let me tell you that your guardian is getting ready to marry you tomorrow.

ROSINE: Oh, Heavens!

FIGARO: Don't worry. We'll keep him so busy he won't be able to give it a thought.

ROSINE: There he is – coming back. Go down by the little stair. You have frightened the life out of me.

[*Exit FIGARO.*]

[*Enter BARTHOLO.*]

ROSINE: Have you had a visitor, Sir?

BARTHOLO: Don Bazile. I was showing him to the door, and with good reason too! You would have preferred it to be Master Figaro, no doubt.

ROSINE: It's all the same to me, I assure you.

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BARTHOLO: I would like to know what that barber was so anxious to tell you.

ROSINE: You really want to know? He came to report how Marceline was. She isn't too well from what he was telling me.

BARTHOLO: Came to report, did he? I wouldn't mind betting he was commissioned to deliver a letter to you.

ROSINE: And from whom, may I ask?

BARTHOLO: From whom? From somebody women never mention. How do I know? Perhaps a reply to the paper you dropped from the window.

ROSINE [*aside*]: He hasn't missed a thing! [*To Bartholo*] It would serve you right if it were!

BARTHOLO [*looking at her hands*]: That's what it is. You've been writing.

ROSINE [*embarrassed*]: It would be interesting to know how you propose to make me confess it.

BARTHOLO [*taking her hand*]: There's no necessity. You've ink stains on your fingers. Ah! Cunning Signora!

ROSINE [*aside*]: The wretch!

BARTHOLO [*still holding her hand*]: Women think they can safely do anything if they are alone.

ROSINE: Of course. A fine sort of proof that is! Let me go. You are twisting my arm. I burned myself when I was snuffing the candle. I have always heard you should put ink on a burn immediately, and that's what I did.

BARTHOLO: That was what you did, was it? Then we'll see if a second piece of evidence confirms the first one. I happen to know that there were six sheets of paper in this writing case. I count them every morning and I did so today.

ROSINE [*aside*]: Simpleton! The sixth . . .

BARTHOLO [*counting*]: Two, three, four, five . . . I can see the sixth isn't here.

ROSINE [*lowering her eyes*]: The sixth? . . . I used it to make a bag for the sweets I sent to Figaro's little girl.

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BARTHOLO: Figaro's little girl? And the new pen nib, how does it come to be ink-stained? Did you use it to write the address of Figaro's little girl?

ROSINE [*aside*]: The man has an instinct for jealousy. [*To Bartholo*] I used it to retrace the flower pattern on the jacket I'm embroidering for you.

BARTHOLO: Very edifying indeed! But if you want people to believe you, my child, you shouldn't blush at each new shift to which you are driven for hiding the truth. You've not learned that yet.

ROSINE: Who wouldn't blush to see such horrid conclusions drawn from things done in all innocence?

BARTHOLO: Oh! Of course I was wrong! Burning one's finger, dipping it in ink, making sweet-bags for Figaro's little girl, tracing designs on my jacket, what could be more innocent? . . . What a pack of lies just to hide one single fact. *I was alone. Nobody could see me. I could lie to my heart's content.* But the stain is still there on the finger, the pen has been used, the sixth sheet is missing! One can't think of everything! What is certain, Signora, is that when I go out into the town I'll see that the door's double-locked on you! [*Enter the COUNT in trooper's uniform, apparently half-seas over and singing 'Let us awake her!'**]

BARTHOLO: What does this fellow want? A soldier! Go to your room, Signora.

THE COUNT [*singing - goes towards Rosine*]: Which of you ladies is Doctor Barordo? [*Whispers to Rosine*] I am Lindor.

BARTHOLO: Bartholo.

ROSINE [*aside*]: He spoke of Lindor!

THE COUNT: Balordo! Batorlo! Malodar! I don't care what it is. All I want to know is which of the two of you . . . [*To Rosine*] Take this letter.

BARTHOLO: Which of the two! You can see perfectly well it's

* A popular song of the period.

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me. Which of the two! Go to your room, Rosine. The man appears to be drunk.

ROSINE: But, Sir, . . . you are alone. A woman sometimes has a restraining influence.

BARTHOLO: Go along. Go along. I'm not frightened of him.
[*She goes.*]

THE COUNT: Oh! I knew you at once from your official description.

BARTHOLO [*to the Count who is putting the letter away*]: What is that you are hiding in your pocket?

THE COUNT: I'm hiding it in my pocket so that you shan't know what it is.

BARTHOLO: My official description? These fellows always think they are talking to soldiers.

THE COUNT: You don't think there's any difficulty in identifying you, do you? [*Sings*]

Old and bald and palsied too
Foxy-looking, cock-eyed, who
Can it be, Doctor, but you?
Bowlegged, stooping, pincer toes,
That's how the description goes.
Mumbling, grumbling,
Weak and fumbling . . . *ad lib* . . .

BARTHOLO: Here! What does this mean? Have you come here to insult me? Get out! At once!

THE COUNT: Get out! Now, now! That's no way to talk. Can't you read, Doctor Bartholo?

BARTHOLO: Preposterous question!

THE COUNT: Don't let it worry you. Neither can I. Yet I'm just as good a doctor as you.

BARTHOLO: How do you make that out?

THE COUNT: Am I not the regimental horse doctor? That's why they billeted me on you – we are colleagues!

BARTHOLO: You have the audacity to compare a vet . . .

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THE COUNT [*sings*]:

No, Doctor dear, we don't pretend
Our art can with yours contend.
Yours not only cures the cough
But the patient carries off. . . .

That's right, isn't it?

BARTHOLO: It ill becomes you – you ignorant bone-setter – to revile the first, foremost, and most beneficial of the sciences.

THE COUNT: Entirely beneficial – to those who practise it.

BARTHOLO: One on whose glory the sun never sets.

THE COUNT: Whose boss-shots the whole earth is insufficient to cover.

BARTHOLO: You oaf! It's obvious you aren't used to talking to anyone but horses.

THE COUNT: Talking to horses! Come, Doctor, from an intelligent man like you! Isn't it common knowledge that while the vet cures his patients without talking to them, the doctor talks to his without . . .

BARTHOLO: Without curing them, I suppose?

THE COUNT: You said it!

BARTHOLO: Who the Devil sent this confounded drunkard here?

THE COUNT: Now you are trying to flatter me.

BARTHOLO: Anyhow. What d'ye want? What did you come for?

THE COUNT [*pretending to be very annoyed*]: All right, then! He's getting annoyed is he! What do I want? Can't you see what I want?

ROSINE [*running into the room*]: Mr Soldier, please don't be angry. [*To Bartholo*] Talk to him gently, Sir. He's just talking nonsense.

THE COUNT: That's quite right. He's just talking nonsense, that fellow, but we are talking sense, we are! You are

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pretty, I'm polite, and that's all that matters. The truth is you are the only person in the house I want to have anything to do with.

ROSINE: And what can I do for you, Mr Soldier?

THE COUNT: A mere trifle, my dear. If what I'm saying isn't very clear . . .

ROSINE: I shall get the spirit of it.

THE COUNT [*showing her the letter*]: Never mind the spirit, stick to the *letter*. It's entirely a question of . . . but what I really mean to say is that you've got to put me up for the night.

BARTHOLO: That's all, is it!

THE COUNT: That's all. Nothing more. Read the nice little note that the billeting officer sent you.

BARTHOLO: Let me see.

[*The COUNT hides the letter and hands him another which BARTHOLO reads:*]

'Doctor Bartholo shall receive, lodge, shelter, and sleep . . .'

THE COUNT [*leaning*]: Sleep!

BARTHOLO: '. . . for one night only the aforementioned Lindor, otherwise known as the Scholar, trooper of the regiment of . . .'

ROSINE: 'Tis he! 'Tis he!

BARTHOLO [*sharply to Rosine*]: What's the matter with you?

THE COUNT: Well, am I wrong now, Doctor Barpolo?

BARTHOLO: One would think the fellow took a deliberate pleasure in finding every possible way of deforming my name. The Devil take you with your Barbolo and Barpolo! Go tell your impudent billeting officer that since I came back from Madrid I'm exempt from having soldiers billeted upon me.

THE COUNT [*aside*]: Oh Lord! That's an awkward one!

BARTHOLO: Ha! my friend, that's one in the eye for you! It even sobers you up a bit, but get out all the same.

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THE COUNT [*aside*]: I thought I'd given myself away. [*To Bartholo*] Get out of it, eh? If you are exempt from billeting you aren't exempt from civility, or are you? Get out! Show me your certificate of exemption. I'll have a look at it even though I can't read it!

BARTHOLO: You won't get away with that! It's in my bureau. [*Goes to get it.*]

THE COUNT [*while BARTHOLO is busy*]: Ah! My charming Rosine!

ROSINE: Lindor! Can it really be you?

THE COUNT: Take this letter.

ROSINE: Be careful. He's watching us.

THE COUNT: Take out your handkerchief and I'll drop the letter. [*Goes towards her.*]

BARTHOLO: Go easy, soldier. I don't like folk getting too near my wife.

THE COUNT: *Is she your wife?*

BARTHOLO: What's that to you?

THE COUNT: I took you for her great-great-grandparent paternal, maternal, and sempiternal. There must be at least three generations between you.

BARTHOLO [*reading from a parchment*]: 'Upon report of good and faithful witnesses . . .'

THE COUNT [*knocking the parchment out of his hand*]: What's all this clap-trap to me . . .?

BARTHOLO: Do you realize, soldier, that if I call my servants I can have you dealt with as you deserve here and now?

THE COUNT: A fight, eh? Willingly! Fighting's my job! [*Indicates his pistol.*] And here's the wherewithal for throwing the dust in their eyes. You've never seen a battle, Madam?

ROSINE: No, and I don't want to!

THE COUNT: There's no better fun than a battle. Imagine -