

ACT ONE

Scene One

Silvio, Pantalone, Clarice, Dottore, Brighella, Smeraldina

A room in Pantalone's house.

All are in a jovial, happy mood. Dottore is prodding Silvio to kneel.

SILVIO

Here is my hand, Clarice, with it I offer you all my love.

PANTALONE

(softly to Clarice) He's proposing to you! Don't turn embarrassed on me now!

CLARICE

Silvio, dearest, here is my hand. (another nudge from Pantalone) I will be your wife.

SILVIO

And I will be yours. (a sign from the Doctor) Your husband.

DOTTORE

Bravissimi! You are irrevocably committed to wedlock.

SMERALDINA

(to herself) That's so great! I wanna be irrevocally com-fitted to wedlock, too.

PANTALONE

Brighella, Smeraldina, you are witnesses to the promises exchanged by my daughter and the very worthy son of my friend and neighbor, Dottore Lombardi.

BRIGHELLA

It is my great honor.

PANTALONE

There! It's done! We don't need more than that to cement the bonds. The Doctor and I are of the same mind, and it was done right, without any fuss or ceremony. Let's eat! And I don't want anybody bothering us. So, whatya think kids, we do okay?

SILVIO

To be always near my Clarice is my greatest happiness.

SMERALDINA

(to herself) I want some of that in *my* life!

DOTTORE

(to Pantalone) Silvio may tend towards high emotion, but he has a good heart and genuinely loves your daughter. In fact, he rarely thinks... or talks, of anything else.

PANTALONE

I just wanna say, this is a match made in heaven. I mean, what if my agent in Turin, that Federig Raspon, hadn't died all of a sudden? If everything'd gone according to what we wanted, he woulda married my daughter, Clarice, and Silvio, here... Silvio, bello mio, wouldn't be my son-in-law! Silvio!

hugs and kisses Silvio

SILVIO

I certainly consider myself fortunate, though I guess I can't be sure that Clarice feels the same...

CLARICE

Silvio!

SILVIO

...she was after all ready to marry that man from Turin...

CLARICE

...because Father wished me to!

SILVIO

Someone you hadn't even met!

CLARICE

Silvio, darling, dearest, no! I love you, only you, and you forever.

SILVIO

(fondly) Clarice...

CLARICE

(patient) Silvio.

DOTTORE

(to Pantalone) You see. When something is divinely decreed, like this is, nothing, nothing in all the world, can prevent it. How was it Signor Rasponi came to such a sudden end?

PANTALONE

Poor guy! Some jerk says something 'bout his sister. He turns hot under the collar and got himself stabbed. That's all I know, that's all I wanna know.

BRIGHELLA

(to Pantalone) This happened in Turin?

PANTALONE

Yep.

BRIGHELLA

Poor Raspon. I'll miss him a lot.

PANTALONE

You knew Federig Raspon?

BRIGHELLA

I worked Turin three years. Knew his sister, too. Now there is one helluva of a lady. Rides a horse like a man. Dresses like one, too. And to meet her is to fall in love. Ah! I never thought I'd hear news like this.

PANTALONE

Tellin' me. Deep pockets and all the right friends. It'd have been good. (sighs) I'm gettin' depressed thinkin' about it. Hey! Whatya say, Brighella, old buddy, I hear you're pretty handy with the old spatula.

BRIGHELLA

Don't mean to brag, but when it comes to food, there's good, there's the best, then there's my place. I'm all yours, what'll it be?

PANTALONE

Oh boy-oh-boy. Let's see. How 'bout vegetable broth and bread. White bread. Day old. I'm on a budget.

there's a knock

The door! Smeraldina?

SMERALDINA

Signor.

Smeraldina goes out

CLARICE

Father, will you excuse me?

PANTALONE

No, no, sweetie pie, you stay right here. Let's see who it is.

SMERALDINA

returning

Signor, it's a servant for a gentleman from out of town who needs to see you. He won't tell me any more. Just that he wants to talk to the master of the house.

PANTALONE

Let's see what he wants, send him in.

SMERALDINA

Subito.

she leaves

CLARICE

I'd best retire, father.

PANTALONE

Where?

CLARICE

Where else? To my room.

PANTALONE

Siddown. (softly to Dottore) She goes in, then pretty soon Silvio goes in... you know?

DOTTORE

(softly) Very wise, most prudent.

Scene Two

Silvio, Pantalone, Clarice, Dottore, Brighella, Smeraldina, Truffaldino

TRUFFALDINO

Fazz umilissima reverenza! I am honored to be in such illustrious company. I'm already stunned by the conversation and overwhelmed by your excellence.

PANTALONE

Who are you? What's your business?

TRUFFALDINO

And this elegant lady?

PANTALONE

My daughter.

TRUFFALDINO

I am captivated.

SMERALDINA

She's engaged.

SILVIO

To me.

TRUFFALDINO

I am devastated. Who are you?

SMERALDINA

The maid, signor.

TRUFFALDINO

I am fascinated.

PANTALONE

Come on, come on! What's your business? Who are you? Who sends you?

TRUFFALDINO

One, I... Two, um... Three, ah... Sorry, would you mind repeating that?

PANTALONE

(softly, to Dottore) This guy strike you as a little... dim?

DOTTORE

Careful. He may be making fun of us.

TRUFFALDINO
(to Smeraldina) You married?

SMERALDINA
What? Um... no.

PANTALONE
You gonna tell me who you are, or should I just make stuff up?

TRUFFALDINO
No, if you made stuff up, you might get it wrong. I'm the servant of my master, my padron. (to Smeraldina) So, what's your answer?

SMERALDINA
To what?

PANTALONE
Well, then, who exactly *is* your padron?

TRUFFALDINO
He's from out of town and wants to see you. (to Smeraldina) My proposal. You wanna talk about it?

PANTALONE
Does he have a name?

TRUFFALDINO
Who?

PANTALONE
Your padron!

TRUFFALDINO
Oh, sure, for a long time, now. (pause) Oh! (very quickly) His name is Signor Federig Raspon my padron, who I respect, brought me here and is waiting downstairs to visit you. He would like to come up, and in the meantime is wondering where the heck I am. (to Smeraldina) Now, about us...

PANTALONE
No, talk to me... to *me*! Buffo! What the hell do you want?

TRUFFALDINO
Truffaldin Batocchio, from a valley just outside Bergamo.

PANTALONE
You're gonna make me have a stroke! I don't care..! Look. Come here and tell me again who your padron is.

TRUFFALDINO
Poor old guy, didn't hear me the first time. (very loudly) Signor Federig Raspon. From Turin!

PANTALONE

Get outta here! You nuts? Federig Raspon of Turin is dead.

TRUFFALDINO

No! He's dead?

PANTALONE

Sure is, unlucky for him.

TRUFFALDINO

What the hell? My padron is *dead*? And he seemed just fine when I left him coupla minutes ago. You telling me the truth? He's dead?

PANTALONE

The man is dead.

DOTTORE

I'd swear to it under oath, Federigo Rasponi is deceased.

TRUFFALDINO

Maybe he had an accident? Really quickly? 'Scuse me.

PANTALONE

That's it?

TRUFFALDINO

He's dead, I'm unemployed. (to himself) This is terrible news; I better check.

he leaves

PANTALONE

What's with this guy? He a crook or just plain nuts?

DOTTORE

I'd say a little of both.

BRIGHELLA

Nuts, probably. He's from Bergamo.

SMERALDINA

Personally, I *love* the way he thinks. (to herself) Can't say I don't not dislike him, this morettino.

PANTALONE

But what is he trying to say about Raspon?

CLARICE

News too horrible to imagine.

PANTALONE

That's ridiculous. I showed you the letter. He's dead!

SILVIO

Were he alive, here and ready with rings, he would still be too late. Clarice and I are engaged.

TRUFFALDINO

returning

I'm amazed at you guys. Jerking me around like that, a stranger from outa town! You call yourselves gentlemen? Like I don't even count?

PANTALONE

See what I mean? (makes the crazy in the head sign) What do you want?

TRUFFALDINO

Didn't you just tell me Signor Raspon is dead?

PANTALONE

So?

TRUFFALDINO

So, he's waiting downstairs; alive, healthy, in high spirits, amazing good humor, and ready to see you, if you ever decide to show him the courtesy.

DOTTORE

Federigo?

TRUFFALDINO

Federig.

DOTTORE

Rasponi?

TRUFFALDINO

Raspon.

DOTTORE

From Torino?

TRUFFALDINO

Turin.

PANTALONE

Check into a hospital, you're a mental case.

TRUFFALDINO

Go to hell in a handbag! Ohmygosh! You've got me swearing like a card sharp.

PANTALONE

(to Dottore) I'm gonna punch this guy right inna nose.

TRUFFALDINO

My padron is in a room downstairs where you've kept him waiting for what probably seems like a year by now.

DOTTORE

Signor Pantalone, just tell him to bring the person he believes is Federigo Rasponi in to see you. You can judge for yourself.

PANTALONE

Go and get this corpse you travel with and let me see it.

TRUFFALDINO

If he really was dead, and I really traveled with him, fair enough, I'd take what you're telling me without a fight. But at the moment he's alive and you can see him sure enough with your own eyes, you can! And I hope you learn a lesson from this about folks from outa town, especially folks from around Bergamo, and proud of it, too! (to Smeraldina) We'll find time to talk, don't worry.

exits

CLARICE

(softly). I'm trembling Silvio!

SILVIO

(softly). Don't worry, you belong to me and that no one can change.

DOTTORE

Sempre veritas vinca!

PANTALONE

Well, I'm not letting nobody pull the wool over these eyes!

BRIGHELLA

Signor! Remember, I know the man.

SMERALDINA

(to herself) I don't believe the morettino has got a lying bone in his body. Let's see how this plays out. (aloud, curtsy) Signori.

she leaves

Scene Three

Silvio, Pantalone, Clarice, Dottore, Brighella, Beatrice

Beatrice is in a man's clothing and under the name of Federigo.

BEATRICE

Signor Pantalone! The courtesy you show in your letters has so far been entirely absent in person. I send my servant, I ask for a meeting, and I am made to wait in your vestibule without your having dignified me with the honor of admission for fully a half hour.

PANTALONE

My apologies, signor, but I don't really know who you are.

BEATRICE

Your agent in Torino, Federigo Rasponi.

BRIGHELLA

(to himself) Whassup? This ain't Federig, this is Beatrice, his sister. I gotta see how this works.

PANTALONE

I apologize. I'm relieved to see you alive and healthy, of course. I was shocked by the terrible rumors. (to Dottore) I don't really buy this, do you?

BEATRICE

The news that I was fatally injured in a brawl? Merely wounded. I set out for Venice as soon as I was able.

PANTALONE

I don't know what to say. I heard about your... um...

DOTTORE

...passing...

PANTALONE

Yes, that... and they told me with such... um...

DOTTORE

...absolute confidence...

PANTALONE

...absolute confidence, that... uh...

DOTTORE

...we are compelled to believe the facts as they were conducted to us, unless of course, you can offer definitive proof to the contrary.

PANTALONE

Right.

BEATRICE

I have four letters certifying my identity, one of which is from a trustee of our bank.

gives four letters to Pantalone, which he reads

CLARICE

(softly). Oh, Silvio, we're lost!

SILVIO

(softly). I would sooner lose my life than you, *dolcissima mia*.

BEATRICE

(to herself) Brighella knows me. Damn. I'd better deal with this right away. (to Brighella) Signor, will you do me the honor of an introduction?

BRIGHELLA

But, signor, I know you, how is it you don't know me? From Turin? Brighella Cavicchio.

BEATRICE

Signor Brighella, and in Venice? (privately) Don't you dare let on who I am.

BRIGHELLA

Of course not. (aloud) Should you require accommodations may I offer you my hotel?

BEATRICE

I'm happy we have chanced to meet. And I *will* need a place to lodge, thank you.

BRIGHELLA

It will be my pleasure. (privately) Like concealing smuggled goods.

BEATRICE

(privately) You'll get your tariff, don't worry. (aloud) Signor Pantalone, do you agree that the letters settle everything?

PANTALONE

They obviously accompany Federig Raspon, but just 'cause you're carrying them don't mean you're him.

CLARICE

Ah!

BEATRICE

Signor Brighella, am I myself?

BRIGHELLA

You are yourself, I can swear to it.

SILVIO

Argh!

PANTALONE

Well... then... Signor Raspon, between the letters and Brighella, here, I have to beg your pardon. I shouldn't have doubted you.

CLARICE

This is the man I was supposed to... this... *man*... is Rasponi?

PANTALONE

You're looking at him.

CLARICE

(softly) This is terrible, Silvio! What about us?

SILVIO

(softly). You are mine, and what is mine, is mine to defend!

PANTALONE

(softly to Dottore). Whatya say Doc? Just under the wire, heh? Whew!

DOTTORE

Accidit in puncto, quod non contingit in anno.