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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TRIPLE MARRIAGE ***

Produced by Dagny and Frank J. Morlock

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THE TRIPLE MARRIAGE

BY

DESTOUCHES

Translated and Adapted

By Frank J. Morlock

C 1982

CHARACTERS:

Mr. Matthews, an old man

Elizabeth, his daughter

Walter, his son

Mr. Manly, Elizabeth's husband

Anna, Elizabeth's maid

The Countess

Polly, Walter's wife

Sophie, Matthew's wife
Trim, Walter's valet
Jeremy, Manly's valet
Belinda, a little girl about ten years of age
Mr. Nugent
A troop of dancers

Scene: A room in Matthews' house.

Matthews No, I cannot be perfectly happy. I had a wife and she died. Out of decency, I mourned her. Secretly, I rejoiced to be delivered from a tyrant who controlled my slightest breath and wanted to rule my inclinations after twenty years of marriage. I thought her death would leave me free.— Now, I am a slave to my children, who force me to go against my own wishes, and to preserve decency, without which I dare not proceed. I have to be careful my affairs are not noised about all over town. I have a son who is bigger than I am: what a mortification for a father who doesn't wish to renounce the world! I have a sweet and pretty daughter—who doesn't want to be a nun. So, to preserve decency, I have to marry her off. What an aggravating necessity for a father who loves his own comfort more than his daughter! What role should I play?— For the time being better keep them amused, so as to have time to arrange matters in the way I wish.

(Enter Anna.)

Anna What's going on, sir? I've just seen I don't know how many men down there getting drunk. What guzzlers! They've already emptied more than thirty bottles, and they complain they are dying of thirst. Who are they?

Matthews
They're dancers and musicians.

Anna
They drink like marines.

Matthews
Well, aren't they doing their job?

Anna Only when they drink at somebody else's expense. I ought to watch them. But, sir, if you please, why have you brought this bacchanalia into your home? Are you giving a ball tonight?

Matthews Yes, child, I intend to give a kind of ball tonight, or rather a little concert mixed with dancing. That's what I brought these musicians and dancers for.

Anna Better take away the drink then, for if they continue as they've begun, you will have to carry them home.

Matthews Never mind, don't worry about it—the more they drink, the better they sound.

Anna Well done! And how were you able to bring yourself to have such a party—you, a sworn enemy to such diversions?

Matthews I have reasons for it which everyone will learn before long. Besides, as my daughter is a little bored, I thought a little diversion like this would cheer her up.

Anna It's true that music and dancing are pleasant, but I don't think this is exactly what your daughter needs to get her health back.

Matthews
Oh, I see where you're coming from. You mean she needs a husband!

Anna Without a doubt. A husband is a sort of prescription medicine for a languishing daughter.

Matthews
I know my daughter: she's very virtuous.

Anna Does it mean you can't want a husband because you're virtuous? On the contrary, it's her virtue which makes an honest girl want a husband. Those who are not so scrupulous have an easier time of it. I am going to prove that to you.

Matthews
I don't need your proofs.

Anna Suppose, for example, you had walked a long, hot road in the summer heat.

Matthews
Well?

Anna And that you were expressly forbidden to drink until you arrived at a resting place where they were waiting for you with agreeable refreshments.

Matthews
What an idea!

Anna If you weren't forbidden, wouldn't you stop at an inn on the way? You wouldn't be in such a hurry to get there if you hadn't scrupulously observed the rule against drinking.

Matthews
I'll agree to that.

Anna That's the exact picture of a young, emancipated woman. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is a traveler who observes the rules with such a scrupulous exactitude that she's reduced to the last extremity. Sir, remember, one cannot always withstand thirst, so it's unwise to put a young girl in the need of refreshing herself along the way by extending the journey.

Matthews You're wasting your breath, I don't believe that eagerness to get it has caused Elizabeth's sickness.

Anna Now, the doctors have lost their Latin for it, or rather, it's a miracle that despite their remedies she's still alive in such a perilous state.— I am not going to stop! She sighs night and day; she cries often; she falls in a languor—in a prostration which makes one fear for her life. Damn, sir, I know what I'm talking about. These are symptoms of an illness caused by love.

Matthews
You think she has some inclination in her heart?

Anna
I have not a doubt of it.

Matthews Come on, come on, that cannot be. I am sure she herself doesn't know what an inclination is.

Anna
Ignorant at twenty-five in an age when girls are so precocious!
Really, you cannot be so blind.

Matthews I forbid you to say a word of this to her. You'll make her have ideas she doesn't have.

Anna
Oh, I wager she has an imagination more vivid than mine.

Matthews
I am going to plan this evening's party.

(Exit Matthews.)

Anna Useless for him to dissemble; my speech exposed him, but I dare not yet hope—

(Enter Elizabeth.)

Elizabeth
Has my father gone? What did you tell him?

Anna
We spoke about your illness. We both rejoiced over your improvement.

Elizabeth
That was all?

Anna
You want to know if he spoke about your getting married?

Elizabeth
Shouldn't I think of it?

Anna True, you're still a girl—and when one remains a virgin so long, one runs the risk of remaining one forever. I've offered your father some pretty thoughts on the matter.

Elizabeth
Did he seem to you more favorably disposed to my wishes?

Anna Not at all. He believes you're still a child, and that you can no more think of marriage than your sister Belinda.

Elizabeth My mother warned me that if she died first, I would run the risk of not being married for a long time.

Anna We indeed see the fulfillment of her prophecy. Death—miss! We must make an effort.

Elizabeth
What do you think I should do?

Anna Tell your father how you feel. Tell him outright that he is stupidly deceived in the opinion he has of you—and that you're too much of a woman to remain a virgin much longer.

Elizabeth
I would never have the courage to tell him such a thing.

Anna Then you must have the courage NOT to marry, and to wait patiently for the old man to die.

Elizabeth
I've made up my mind about that.

Anna You could do something to help yourself, but you will never have the courage to do it.

Elizabeth
What could I do?

Anna Cast your spell over some honest man, agree together, and marry secretly.

Elizabeth
You give me advice like that?

Anna My word, Miss, one has to help save your life. When a father pays no attention to your needs—it is permitted to take care of oneself, if one can do it honorably. Don't waste your time pretending, I am sure you love Manly.

Elizabeth
I would have a lot to tell you if I were sure of your discretion.

Anna I'm a woman, but I can keep a secret. And, if you doubt it, I don't want to know anything.

Elizabeth After all the proofs you've given me of your affection, I am sure you wouldn't want me to be lost—and lost I will be, if you tell anyone what I am about to confide in you.

Anna
I swear to you that your interests are more dear to me than my own.

Elizabeth
First of all, I swear to you that I love Manly with all my heart.

Anna
I never doubted that for a minute.

Elizabeth
And, I have promised to love him all my life.

Anna You shouldn't make such a promise; a girl should never pin herself down like that.

Elizabeth (puzzled)
Why?

Anna

Because a hundred to one, she will be unable to keep her word.

Elizabeth

I will keep mine with Manly.

Anna (maliciously)

You don't intend to marry him then?

Elizabeth

To the contrary, I've promised never to marry anyone else.

Anna My word, Miss, love and marriage have been divorced for a long time and have sworn never to live together. I hold their oaths are more likely to be kept than yours.

Elizabeth

Stop joking; Manly and I have found a way to keep in touch.

Anna

I wish it. Is that all you have to tell me?

Elizabeth

I tremble to tell you the rest.

Anna

Oh! Oh! I'm afraid you've quenched your thirst en route.

Elizabeth

What do you meant by that?

Anna

You know what I mean by it.— Continue!

Elizabeth As Manly is my equal in birth, and besides has a considerable fortune, we agreed that one of his friends should go to my father without naming Manly as the person in question, to find out if my father would be willing to give me in marriage to a person who is perfectly suited to me.

Anna

Good.

Elizabeth I cannot tell you how coldly he was received. In a word, my father absolutely refused everybody who was named.

Anna Death! There's a father who deserves a daughter who will marry herself.

Elizabeth

Would you do such a thing?

Anna

Me? Ten times!

Elizabeth Well, my poor Anna, I have already taken your advice. We've already secretly married— My aunt witnessed it at her house, where I am able to meet Manly. Unfortunately, my happiness won't last long. My father is alarmed at the frequent visits I make to my aunt. He has ordered me not to go there and has forbidden Manly to come here. I am in despair and my fret has throne me into a sickness I think I'll die of.

Anna

I am delighted to know all this— And I want to help you— But what do I see?

(Enter Manly and Jeremy dressed as dancers.)

Jeremy

Come, sir, courage, we must kiss the hands of those two young ladies.

Manly

Shut up, you rogue, and think of showing some respect.

Jeremy My word, I'm a little drunk. Drinking and respectfulness do not keep the same company.

Manly I fear this bibbler will ruin my plans. What a misfortune to have need of you.

Elizabeth
Anna, who are these people?

Anna They are two of the dancers your father has brought. They are dressed to amuse, apparently.

Jeremy
Yes, my ladies, we come to give you a little moment of sport.

Anna
I know that mug!

Jeremy
Mug! Oh! Mug yourself!

Manly (to Jeremy)
Will you shut up?

Elizabeth
What do I hear? It's Manly's voice— It's Manly that I see. Ah, Heaven!

Manly Don't be frightened, Elizabeth. Yes, it is Manly who presents himself to you, and who cuts through insurmountable obstacles to obtain the pleasure of seeing you.

Elizabeth You couldn't surprise me more agreeably. My joy is so great that I can hardly speak. But my happiness is cruelly crossed by the fact that my father will discover you.

Manly I beg you not to worry; this disguise hides me from his eyes so effectively that he has no idea I am here—besides, he's seen me too infrequently to spot me in this get-up.

Elizabeth
And how did you get in?

Manly I sent the dancers and musicians to your home and paid them some money to introduce me as one of their comrades. I thought it was wise that Jeremy play a role, too. Jeremy doesn't dance badly, and I only do passably well—and we ought to appear indistinguishable in the little divertissement that is being prepared.

Anna And, how can Jeremy help you? He is so drunk that he doesn't know what's going on.

Jeremy Don't worry, I'm never better than when I'm drunk. On my oath, I was born to be a musician.

Anna
It would seem so. You're well adapted to your part.

Elizabeth
This man will infallibly give you away.

Jeremy Eh! What a thing to say! Don't I know that your father is a brute who refuses to see my master—and that my master has a passion that forces him to see you despite your father. Therefore, for that reason, it follows—that my master must see you without your father seeing him. And me, like a discreet confidant,—it follows that I must see you both while seeing nothing. Go, children, profit by the opportunity. Two make a party. Have a nice time together while I amuse myself with this hussy.

Elizabeth
Your valet makes me terribly nervous.

Manly Rogue! If you give me away, I will give you a hell of a beating when we are outside— I cannot live without seeing you, my dear Elizabeth.

Jeremy
Nor I, without kissing you, my dear Anna.

Manly I will enjoy the happiness heaven grants me now, knowing the perfect felicity will be followed by a long period of sighing. But don't make me worry for your life, that is the bounty that I beg on my knees.

Elizabeth Yes, I promise you, I'll be all right. Manly, get up—if you are caught in that position all will be lost.

Manly
No—I won't get up until you swear to me.

Anna
Peace! I hear someone.

(Enter Belinda, about ten years old.)

Belinda Ah, ah, my sister, I caught you at it. A man at your feet. It's very cute—really, ha, ha, ha.

Elizabeth
Oh, I am in despair. She will tell everything to my father.

Jeremy
Plague on the little critter.

Anna
What do you want here, Miss?

Belinda You don't think of me. You each have one of your own, but you leave me without one.

Elizabeth
What are you getting at, little scatterbrain?

Belinda Hey, yes, yes, little scatterbrain. This gentleman here didn't whisper sweet nothings in your ear—and this one didn't kiss Anna? Mere tricks!

Jeremy What do you want, little girl? If I understand you, I will give you a spanking.

Belinda
A spanking. Ah, ah—listen.

Jeremy
Yes, a spanking. Come one, bring me a switch right away.

Belinda
Look at this drunk who wants to give me a whipping.

Jeremy
Drunk! This little minx is too smart to live.

Anna Listen, little girl! Don't go telling stupid stories. It's your father himself who invited these gentlemen.

Belinda
I am well aware he invited them. But to dance, not make love.

Elizabeth
What? You have the impudence—

Belinda Come on, come on. I already know about THINGS. To be languorous, to throw himself at your feet, to kiss your hands tenderly, to cast dying looks—they call that making love—and I know perfectly well.

Manly
This little creature is very dangerous!

Belinda
I also caught my father doing the same thing this morning.

Anna
Your father?

Belinda Yes, indeed. He was decked out like a young man. I didn't say anything to him about it, but I watched him carefully.— When I'm big, I will remind him of it if he should try to prevent me from taking a lover.

Anna
Here's the most naughty little pest I've ever known.

Belinda You're really irritated, aren't you, at what I've found out—for I can make you furious and

revenge myself on my sister who treats me like a child, and who wants to be married before me.

Elizabeth

Well, you can get married first. Don't say anything.

Belinda

Good! I will marry first. You have the patience to wait till then?
Come, come, sister, marry this gentleman quickly—then they will soon give me a chance to choose one for myself.

Elizabeth Didn't I tell you that this gentleman is a dancer, and that I don't find him attractive?

Belinda

Hey, yes! A dancer! What a dancer!

Anna

Certainly.

Belinda

It's no use for him to hide behind his mask.

Elizabeth

Go on, you're crazy.

Belinda Hey, no. I didn't see him down there drinking with the musicians; I didn't listen to him when he wasn't aware of it. He told them he'd give them plenty of money if they would pretend he was one of them—that he would be so upset, so upset, if my father saw him. Oh, if he's so afraid of my father, then he must be your lover—for my father doesn't want you to have any lovers. He's very wrong, because I think this is very amusing.

Elizabeth

How miserable I am!

Belinda Go, go, fear nothing, sister, put your affairs in repose. I will prevent papa from coming here when he gets back—but, on the condition that you will help me when I get big.

Elizabeth

I swear it.

Anna

Me, too.

(Exit Belinda.)

Anna That little girl promises much. A ten year old to discover a secret intrigue!

Elizabeth I swear to you that I'm terribly nervous and I believe that although you just got here, it would be better for you to leave.

Anna And I, for one, think it isn't necessary. Count on Belinda saying nothing. Wait till she gets married. What a talent for pacifying a jealous husband. The man will be lost—for husbands in this country are the nicest in the world and it doesn't take much skill to trap them.

Elizabeth Anna, really!—it would be better if you kept your mind on how to help us, instead of giving vent to such silly ideas!

Anna As you like. I am going to tell that precocious little girl not to say a word to your father.

Elizabeth

I will be very much obliged to you.

Anna

On my word, here he is himself.

Elizabeth

Oh, we are discovered.

Jeremy

Watch yourselves carefully.

(Enter Mr. Matthews.)

Matthews
Good day, my dear, how are you feeling?

Elizabeth
Not very ill today, papa.

Anna
I wager it was Miss Belinda who sent you here.

Matthews Oh no, she didn't want me to come. She told me Elizabeth had left with you to take a walk in the Park.

Anna That is what we spoke of doing in front of her, but Miss Elizabeth changed her mind because she is a little indisposed—and because she really loves dancing. I brought these gentlemen here while waiting for your little show.

Matthews
You did very well.

Anna
They are dressed to play a very exciting part.

Matthews
They both look good.

Jeremy Sir, in all modesty, we are very light on our feet. (falling drunkenly on Matthews)

Matthews
Not so light, it would seem.

Anna They are so drunk, both of them, that they haven't the strength to dance two steps. I told you exactly what would happen.

Jeremy
Frankly, Mr. Matthews, you really have the finest wine to be had in London, and if I weren't as sober as I am, I would be of half a mind to take good care of it.

Matthews
It seems to me, you haven't been too thrifty with it.

Jeremy The better to amuse you. Wine gives me a strength, a suppleness. Would you like to dance a little entrée with me, Mr. Matthews?

Matthews No, no, my boy, you will do better to go sleep and wait till everybody's come.

Jeremy
You are a man of good counsel. Agreed! To sleep.

Matthews I believe this one is not so drunk as the other fellow, because he doesn't say a word.

Jeremy
He doesn't think the less. My master has a sad mind.

Matthews
What—his master?

Jeremy Hey, yes, sure! I am only his assistant. Wait till you see him. He's the best fellow in the world, and if you wish he will demonstrate with your daughter.

Matthews
Do you feel like trying it with him?

Elizabeth I wouldn't dare suggest it to you, papa, but if you wish it, it would give me the greatest pleasure in the world.

Matthews I retained you to show my daughter. She already has had good instruction.

Jeremy
So much the better. My master always wishes to add to his scholars.

Manly (pretending to be drunk)
Don't worry. I will impart to her all my—hic—skills.

Matthews
As soon as you can, I beg you. I've just decided to marry her off—and I want her to dance at her wedding.

Anna
And, to whom are you planning to marry her, if you please?

Matthews
To one of my best friends—we were students together.

Anna
With one of your school mates! Really, you're joking.

Matthews What! Didn't you just tell me a little while ago that she needs a husband?

Anna Yes, sir. But believe me—but my word, will a man who was your school mate be capable of restoring her to health?

Matthews Mr. Nugent offers to take her without a dowry. I like that idea. He's coming here immediately, and I had better get ready to see him.

(Exit Matthews.)

Jeremy
Madame Nugent, I am your very humble servant.

Manly
Double crosser! Is now a time to joke?

Elizabeth
Ah, Manly, what will become of us?

Elizabeth
Anna, help us with your advice.

Anna I'm as flabbergasted as you, and what has just been said makes me even more so.

Elizabeth Ah, if only my brother Walter were here! He loves me and father really cares about him. We could confide our secret to him and he would be able to help us. But he's been in the country for the last eight days and we don't know when he'll be back.

Jeremy My God, what a mess you're in. But, I've found a way to get you out of it.

Manly
What good can you do us in the state you're in?

Jeremy
Wine gives me wit.— Silence, I am going to speak.

Manly
Let's see.

Jeremy First of all, Miss Elizabeth must explain to her father, and do so with great discretion and charm: Dear father, you don't know what you're saying or doing.

Anna
Beautiful beginning.

Jeremy
And secondly, you must speak to this old scholar who wants to marry Miss Elizabeth.

Manly
Well, what do I tell him?

Jeremy You will beg him very kindly (for I wish to be kind to everybody) to leave here as fast as he can, but on the condition that he never return.

Manly
Nice thing to say.

Jeremy So much the better if things fall out so that you don't have to do anything.

Manly
What's so much the better?

Jeremy Yes, indeed. We won't soon be defeated. Because if he refuses to leave by the door, we must throw him out the window.

Manly
Oh, shut up, stupid—leave us alone so we can consider.

(Trim's voice: Tally-ho!)

Anna
I hear someone. It sounds like Trim.

Elizabeth
If it's Trim, my brother isn't far away.

Anna Return to your room, Miss Elizabeth. You, gentlemen, go join your pretended comrades. I wish to sound out Trim and learn from him whether or not Walter has some inclination. In that case, you have common interests, and I plan to unite them to upset your father's plans.

Elizabeth
Good idea. We must let her try. Her efforts may be useful to us.

Manly You can count on being rewarded in proportion to the degree your services prove useful to us.

(Enter Trim, dressed for the hunt, with a hunting horn.)

Trim
Tally-ho! Tally-ho!

Anna Eh! What's the reason for all this hunting noise? Have you lost your mind, my boy?

Trim
No, my dear. I am just as clever as usual. Is Mr. Matthews home?

Anna
No.

Trim
Are you positive?

Anna Absolutely certain! He would be very angry at your making such a racket.

Trim (walking about the stage)
Tally-ho! Tally-ho!

Anna
Ah! You'll be the death of me! Stop it, and don't bore me anymore.
What devilish music is that?

Trim
Do you believe that Mr. Matthews heard me?

Anna
Without a doubt, and all the neighbors, too. (Trim blasts his horn)
But, what do I hear? More noise of the hunt. Are we in the time of the fairies, and have I been suddenly transported into a forest?

Trim
Ah, my dear, I would love to find you in the depths of a dark wood.

Anna
Why? To cut my throat?

Trim

No, child, you wouldn't die of it. (another blast on the horn)

Anna

Why keep it up? What do you mean to do?

Trim

My master is hunting in his father's antechamber.

Anna

Would you mind telling me what this means?

Trim

It means that we make a noise.

Anna Does your master wish to insult his father? Are you dreaming? Are you possessed?

Trim

Oh, be patient, and you will learn everything.

Anna

Hurry up then! What's going on?

Trim We are trying to make Mr. Matthews think we have returned from a big hunting party in the country. We have just brought two mules home laden with game.

Anna

Two mules! What poachers! Did you depopulate the entire countryside?

Trim

Indeed, yes. We haven't left anything in the meat shops.

Anna

What the deuce are you talking about?

Trim

We were not at Cliffordshire Manor as we wish to fool old man Matthews into believing. We've only been to a village half a league from London, and we haven't even killed a sparrow.

Anna

What were you doing there for eight days?

Trim The plague! Beautiful business, but it is a secret that I am not permitted to divulge to you.

Anna

Why not?

Trim Because, my master has forbidden me to speak of it, and that's why I'm dying from the desire to tell you the whole thing. Oh, the heavy weight of a secret! Well—here it is—my master— Stop there, Trim, you are going to do something stupid.

Anna

You hide something from me,—from your mistress?

Trim I agree: that's not in the rules. But, at the same time, I have a thought: my mistress is a woman. Would she be a woman if she were not a person incapable of keeping her mouth shut and under the compulsion to reveal the greatest secret within twenty-four hours or die?

Anna Don't worry. I—I am stronger than a man about discretion. Speak or I will break with you.

Trim You take me on my tender side. All right, I've got to tell you. The greatest men engage in madness for these little bitches.— Nobody can hear us?

Anna

Not unless you speak loudly.

Trim

The devil! There are not childish games.

Anna

Well, then?

Trim If someone discovers the mystery, my master will be disinherited— there it is, more or less.

Anna
The deuce!

Trim And I, on the other hand, will inherit a beating. I don't like the idea of such a windfall.

Anna
You are only exciting my curiosity. Where have you been?

Trim We were— Shh! Here comes the old man. I've got to pacify him adroitly on this subject. Leave us—I will join you as soon as I can.

(Exit Anna. Enter Matthews without seeing Trim.)

Matthews
To play me such a trick!

Trim (aside)
He seems to be in a rage.

Matthews
To try to put one over on me with such effrontery—a story like that.

Trim
Have we been found out?

Matthews
To have the audacity to say he came from Cliffordshire Manor.

Trim
The mine is blown.

Matthews I wish to know if that devil Trim will also have the effrontery to pass this imposture off on me.

Trim
He knows everything.

Matthews (seeing Trim)
Please? Ah, you here. I'm very glad to find you, Mr. Scamp.

Trim
Good day, sir, how are you?

Matthews
That has nothing to do with your business.

Trim Pardon, sir. The interest that I take in your precious health from the moment that I am separated from you, creates in my foreboding heart, sentiments of the most lively tenderness, and delivers it into the turmoil of the excess of both tender and passionate emotions. Now, you are well, and I rejoice over it.

Matthews
Double crosser! It's not a question of this gammon you are telling me.

Trim
Anything you please. What is it a question of?

Matthews
Tell me where my son has been for the last week!

Trim
Didn't he tell you?

Matthews
He told me that he was at Cliffordshire Manor.

Trim

Well, that's the truth.

Matthews

Didn't I predict you would tell me that?

Trim

Yes, I said so, and I will continue to say so. When I tell the truth, I fear nobody.

Matthews

I have to admire the effrontery of this gallows-bird.

Trim (wishing to escape)

Oh—if you're getting irritated.

Matthews

Stay put, or I'll brain you.

Trim

Is there something I can do to serve you? You have only to speak.

Matthews

And you, you have only two choices to make.

Trim

Let us see.

Matthews

Take two pounds or be pounded on the head twenty times.

Trim

Simple choice. I'll take the two pounds.

Matthews (giving him money)

Here they are.

Trim

Thank you, sir. I wish you a good day.

Matthews (astounded)

You're going somewhere?

Trim

Yes, indeed. Didn't I choose?

Matthews

And have you told me what I want to know?

Trim

What sir?

Matthews Where did you spend the entire week? I know that it wasn't at Cliffordshire Manor. Clifford's aunt, the Countess, has come. She was staying with Clifford for two weeks, and she just told me that my son had not put in an appearance.

Trim

She wouldn't dare to say that to my face.

Matthews

That we'll see. She's still here.

Trim Oh, if she's still here, I have nothing to say. I cannot tell a woman of her quality that she's crazy.

Matthews You're trying to put me off the scent. But you won't succeed. I'm on my guard. Come on, tell the truth.

Trim

Oh, willingly! It's my character to tell the truth.

Matthews

You sanctimonious hypocrite!

Trim

So, to tell you exactly—

Matthews The double crosser is going to lie! But, reckon, that will serve nothing. I know where you were.

Trim

If you know, why do you ask me?

Matthews

I want to hear it from your own mouth.

Trim Oh, fie, sir! Where is honor, where is probity? I give the word of a gentleman. Admit to me that you know nothing if I keep silent.

Matthews'

If you keep silent, I will roast you.

Trim They will be blows wasted. I have shoulders equal to any beating. I am of the race of sergeants and blows cannot frighten an illustrious member of my family.

Matthews

A singularly well-bred villain.

Trim It is I who have an interest to make you admit that you are totally ignorant of where we have been.

Matthews

Why?

Trim Because I am sensible of the honor. I want to be able to boast that you have caught me, and gained nothing from your money.

Matthews

Well, I admit that all I know is that you were not where you said.

Trim

You don't know any more than that?

Matthews

No, that's the truth.

Trim

So much the better! May the plague choke me if I tell you any more.

Matthews

You won't speak?

Trim

Here's your money. I have the right to keep my mouth shut.

Matthews

And, I have the right to brain you.

Trim Strike. I will make you see that I have degenerated not one whit from the intrepidity of my forebears.

Matthews His impudence leaves me helpless, and I know no more where I'm at than before. I order you to leave my house, and to never let me see you again.

(Exit Matthews.)

Trim My word, I've had to withstand a rude assault—but, I brought it off like a gentleman. Now, let's look for my master. I have to instruct him.— Here he is in the nick of time.

(Enter Walter.)

Walter

What's the matter with you, Trim?

Trim Nothing. Just thinking about a terrible beating I almost got because of you.

Walter

Because of me! And who is the rogue who wished to beat you?

Trim

Your honored father.

Walter

I don't understand a word. Are you joking?

Trim

No, indeed. The Countess of Cliffordshire has just informed Mr. Matthews that we were nowhere near her nephew's estate.

Walter Ah, the old fool. She has sworn to make me unhappy. It isn't the only evil she has done me.

Trim

I know she's the devil.

Walter You know she's been in love with me for the last two years and she's mad for me to respond to her.

Trim That's the truth! I've helped you deceive her a bit: you've had some narrow escapes.

Walter

Here, you see, she's coming to persecute me some more.

Trim

Leave her to me. I'll give her her walking papers.

(Enter the Countess.)

Countess

Well, sir, you've finally decided to stop hoping for me.

Walter

Me, Madame? I have no intention of giving you any trouble.

Trim

He doesn't think you're the only one in the world.

Countess I don't know about that! What's all this about your little hunting trip?

Walter Madame, with your indulgence, I really don't have any story to tell you.

Countess You don't owe me any explanation, little rogue! I can tell you better. You must tell me now where you've been for the last eight days. Are you pretending to me that you were with Clifford?—I'm waiting, faithless one, and I flatter myself that love will draw it from you.

Trim Madame, he prayed for love to lead him, but unfortunately, they lost their way and became separated.

Countess Eh! You should have followed love, ingrate! How could you be in league together, when I wasn't there?

Trim They didn't know their way, Madame. Or me either. Love is blind, I hear tell—and when one takes love for a guide, it's easy to get lost.

Countess All this gallantry is useless. I want him to answer my questions himself.

Walter It suits you, Madame, to reproach me—after all you have done to embroil me with my father. If my absence bothered you, you should have had an explanation with me—I would have explained everything. But, after the service you have just done me, I will tell you plainly, you will learn nothing.

Countess

I will learn nothing! You will explain to me or I will strangle you.

Trim Let it go, Madame—he's a bullhead, and won't say a thing. I will respond to you; I will interpret his thoughts.

Countess Well—speak, and I will recompense you in accordance with your sincerity.

Trim

You have a very tender feeling for him.

Countess

So much, you cannot imagine. I lose my wits, my poor Trim.

Trim It's apparent. You want him to respond with a tenderness equal to your own.

Countess

Haven't I the right to expect it?

Trim There are pros and cons to this business. He knows how you feel toward him. He's a very penetrating fellow. There it is, Madame, I wager a hundred pounds against you that he can never love you.

Countess He can never love me, villain? I don't know what prevents me from scratching your eyes out.

Trim Softly, if you please. It is not I who am insensible to your charms— on the contrary, I find them very—piquant—although they're not of the first edition.

Countess He can never love me! (to Walter) Is he speaking the truth, perfidious wretch?

Walter Madame, in truth—I am in confusion, if my heart were— Trim, explain all this to Madame La Comtesse.

Countess

He can never love me!

Trim

No, Madame, but it's your fault, not his.

Countess

It's my fault—after all that I've done?

Trim That's true. We don't disagree. But the fact is, you have such nobility in your looks, such majesty, and I don't know what that's grave and imposing—that it can only inspire him with esteem and respect. Love doesn't rub off from such venerable personages.

Countess If my features inspire him with respect, my glances ought to inspire him with love.

Trim

That's where we disagree.

Countess

You cannot disagree.

Walter Hold, Madame, I've great obligations to you; I am too gallant a man not to speak to you sincerely. Let me then disabuse you, and say to you, with all respect, that I owe you that.

Countess Don't finish, you double crosser. I know where that little speech is going to end.

Trim

But, you are very wrong, Madame.

Countess

I am wrong, me! I am wrong! In what respect, if you please?

Trim You're wrong to come into the world twenty years before he did. Why were you in such a hurry? If you loved him with so much tenderness, you ought to have planned ahead, and seen to it that he was born five or six years before you.

Countess

That depends on me?

Trim

No, Madame. But it doesn't depend on him to love you.

Countess

Then, why was it necessary to deceive me with false protestations?

Trim
They were not his.

Countess
And, whose then?

Trim His father's who let it all happen. You offered to help him in his needs. The occasion was pressing. He saw a way to profit by your generosity. For recompense you wanted signs of love. The poor boy put himself to incredible expense in sighs and protestations. You treated it as a trifle, and he had no other coin to pay you in.

Countess
You say not a word to this, sir?

Walter
My word, Madame, he who makes no protest consents.

Trim
Would you like me to tell you a way to revenge yourself on him?

Countess
You would give me a great satisfaction, because I am beside myself.

Trim And I, I who speak to you, I am in a rage against him. Let's stand a little further off.

Walter
What the devil's he going to say to her?

Trim
What are you looking for in a husband, Madame?"

Countess
A nice young man.

Trim
Well, I am your man. I will marry you, if you wish.

Countess
Get away from me, you wretch!

Trim
I will avenge you better than anyone else.

Countess
Get out, I tell you—I have a more sure way to punish this infidel.

Trim
That's what I'm afraid of.

Walter
And, what have I to fear?

Countess
Everything. I am going to marry you, in spite of yourself.

Walter
Marry me! Ah, Madame, you wouldn't be as cruel as that.

Countess Yes, perjurer! I have just asked you from your father. I offered to take you without a penny. My proposition was agreeable and he accepted it, and that is enough for me. Goodbye, sir. Think about it. But, get it in your head that I am to be your wife. I have sworn it—it will be—and I am the one who tells you so,—and I am your very humble servant.

(Exit Countess.)

Trim
She's woman enough to do just as she said—at the very least.

Walter
What a mess the crazy old fool has put me in.

(Enter Elizabeth and Anna.)

Elizabeth

Oh, brother dear, I really need your help.

Walter

Oh, sis, I really need your help.

Elizabeth

My father has put me in despair.

Walter

My father wishes me to die of sorrow.

Elizabeth

Papa intends to marry me to Mr. Nugent.

Walter

He wants me to marry the old countess.

Elizabeth

I'll die if I do it.

Walter

I'll die if I don't resist him.

Anna Here's a good beginning. Our fortunes are parallel—and don't they resemble each other in other respects?

Walter Ah, Anna! My sister has less to complain of than I. She lacks the strength to resist—and she will end up living with a man she has the right to hate; but my fate is more cruel. For, I cannot follow father's orders or explain to him the reasons that prevent me from doing so.

Anna

We are in the same boat!

Walter

How can that be?

Anna

Explain yourself a little more and we will do the same.

Elizabeth

Brother—hide nothing from me, I beg you.

Walter Ah, sister; I dare not speak. The slightest indiscretion and I am lost.

Anna

Same here. A single word is capable of ruining everything.

Elizabeth

Brother, do you believe I am capable of betraying you?

Walter I can't conceal anything from you—Trim—tell her what has happened. I haven't the strength to do it myself.

Trim

Me, sir—reveal a secret! You take me for someone else.

Walter

All that I will admit—generally—is that I cannot marry from now on.

Elizabeth Alas, brother, it is no longer permitted that you consent to the marriage proposed for me.

Walter

The hardness of my father has constrained me to certain measures which I am unable to take back.

Elizabeth The same reason has put me under the necessity of consenting to engagements which can no longer be broken.

Walter

I am already married, sis.

Elizabeth

I am already married, brother.

Walter

Ah, heavens, who is your spouse?

Elizabeth

Manly.

Walter

Manly—I know him. He's one of my friends.

Elizabeth

And who is the wife you have taken?

Walter

Julia. Miss Prescott.

Elizabeth

I know her. She's a darling.

Anna

So, the confidence has taken place.

Elizabeth

What role do you play, brother?

Walter That of exposing myself to everyone rather than break my marriage vows. And you, sis?

Elizabeth

To die, rather than break my word.

Anna

Here comes your father, with the Countess and Mr. Nugent.

Walter

I tremble.

Elizabeth

I can't any more.

(Enter Matthews, The Countess, and Mr. Nugent.)

Matthews Here they are—both of them. I am going to make them agree to the projects we've formed.

Countess

Here's where you must employ all your parental authority.

Nugent For myself, I make no pretence to the hand of Miss Elizabeth, unless she gives it to me from her heart.

Matthews

Oh, it's you, the huntsman. When will your return to Cliffordshire Manor?

Walter

Father, if you will only listen to me.

Matthews I don't have to listen. To mend the wrong you've done me, you must prepare to obey me.

Walter

If what you order me to do is possible—if not, then I can't do it.

(Enter Belinda.)

Belinda Papa, there are, I don't know how many maskers who have just come in because they heard the violins. They are very nice. Do you want to let them come here?

Matthews They are very welcome. On a day like this, we must think only of spreading joy.

(Enter Julia, Manly, and other Maskers.)

Countess The assembly is not numerous, but it is agreeable. Come here, Walter, here is a happy day for you.

Matthews
Assuredly, a happier one than he deserves.

Countess
You've been told my intentions.

Walter
Madame.

Countess Now, I will marry you. All your rivals will die of jealousy—but you deserve victory. As for the rest, your esteemed father has given his word for our marriage.

Nugent And, he promised me, too, Miss, that I will have the honor of marrying you.

Matthews
Say something.

Countess
He's so overwhelmed with joy that he lacks the strength to thank me.

Nugent
Missy doesn't seem to me so rejoiced by the news I've brought her.

Matthews
We'll speak of that later, Madame. Let's think of our entertainment.

Countess
No, if you please, I want to finish. I only dance when I feel like it.

Walter If you're in such a hurry to finish, Madame, I will take the liberty of saying to you, with my father's permission—that I do not at all wish to get married.

Countess (grandly)
All that is useless.

Walter I have great respect for you, Madame—but that is all your person inspires me with.

Matthews It isn't a question of love or respect. The offer Madame made to me was so advantageous for you, and for me, that you cannot do better than marry her.

Walter Does self interest oblige you to render me miserable? Cast a father's eyes at me, and don't drive a son who throws himself at your feet to despair. For I am resolved to die a thousand times rather than let myself be mercilessly sacrificed.

Matthews
Get up, rogue, you will wait for me.

Walter
I won't get up unless you hear my reasons.

Matthews I'm sure they're good ones. But I've given my word to Madame. As for that, I don't wish to force you to marry her—but I beg you to resolve this out of love for me. Can you refuse a request asked by your father?— When he has the right to make you obey him?

Walter Heaven is my witness, I have tried to conquer my distaste and to respond in kind to such a soft and obliging proceeding; if it still depended on me to comply with your wishes in this—but you force me to tell you, before the whole world, that I am not free and my word is pledged forever.

Matthews
Forever! Without my consent?

Walter Only consider the difficult step I have just taken. You never wanted me to marry. I have taken a wife without your consent. My uncle, and all my relatives advised me to do it. And it was in their presence that I married Julia, Miss Prescott, a week ago.

Matthews I'm delighted to know that, Mr. Rogue, I know what measures I must take.

Walter All your measures will be useless. I pray heaven to destroy me, if I ever take another wife, except Julia, Miss Prescott. All the world knows Julia,—Miss Prescott, to be wise and virtuous. She had noble birth and a fortune large enough so that we can live comfortably without having a charge on you. The whole world is ours.

Matthews It infuriates me to agree he's right, and that I cannot disapprove this marriage without injustice.

Countess

Well! I can break it, even if you are crazy enough to approve it.

Walter

And, by what right, Madame, if you please?

Nugent

Believe me, Madame, it's better to swallow the pill quietly.

Countess

Wait and see. He will marry me or I will have him abducted.

(Exit Countess.)

Matthews Let her talk. It's a woman speaking. Anna, go find Julia. When you cannot prevent things, you have to accept them with a good grace. I am going to tell her myself that I recognize her as my daughter.

Julia (unmasking) Here I am, sir. Let me receive this precious title and tell you that I will do everything possible to be worthy of it.

Matthews Ah, my daughter-in-law was in the masquerade. Be welcome, Madame. It's not necessary that I say anything more to you as you've overheard everything.

Julia

I am touched by your kindness, and you will never regret it.

Walter

What a recompense I owe you father.

Matthews Forget the sweet talk. Let's enjoy ourselves by celebrating another marriage, the one between my daughter and Mr. Nugent.

Anna

Now, it's your turn, Miss. You must jump the ditch.

Elizabeth While you're disposed to pardon, father, and since you've shown so much indulgence to my poor brother and Julia. Let me ask you for the same grace.

Matthews

What now?

Elizabeth I don't love this gentleman. If my life means anything to you, don't force me to marry him. I've thought about dying for a long time during my illness—which was brought on by your refusal to let me marry Manly. Be sure I am going to die at your feet if you don't approve my marriage to Manly as well.

Matthews

If I don't approve the marriage! You're secretly married, too?

Elizabeth It's with great confusion that I admit it. Yes, father, Manly is my husband. I've been married to him for the last six months, and my aunt who has a fortune wished to unite us together.

Matthews Your uncle, your aunt. By God, I'm indebted to my brother and sister for the care they take of my children! Well, here's an affair for which there's less remedy than the other. Mr. Nugent, I cannot break this marriage without dishonoring my daughter.

Nugent

There's nothing for me to do but leave this honorable company.

(Exit Nugent with a cold bow.)

Matthews Come, come, I am well aware there's nothing I can do. Let some one tell Manly that I accept him as my son-in-law—but on condition that he gets nothing from me until I die.

Manly (unmasking) I accept this condition with all my heart. I'm very happy you deign to give me Elizabeth, who is worth a hundred times more to me than all the wealth in the world.

Matthews Oh, my dancing master, you demonstrate to my daughter without my permission?— As for that, children, I pardon your faults and your follies, provided you pardon mine.

Walter
What's that mean, father?

Matthews
I am secretly married, too. Me, your modest father.

Trim
Without our consent?

Matthews I didn't wish to declare the business for fear it might upset you, but this development mutually excuses all.

Walter Let's see our step-mother, and we will receive her with all the tenderness and respect we owe you.

Matthews She is also in the masquerade, and it was for her that I planned the party. Deign to unmask, Madame, and take these young marrieds for your children.

Sonia (unmasking) I'm very happy to enter into so loveable a family. I hope they are as happy as I am to be their mother.

Trim
Anna, shall we give our consent to this marriage?

Anna One could criticize it. But, come, it's necessary to grant a general amnesty.

Belinda
Papa. I have one more blessing to ask you.

Matthews
What? My God, wench, are you secretly married, too?

Belinda No, no, Papa. I don't want to be married except by your consent. So I bet you; it would be so nice.

Matthews We shall see in a few years. Good Lord, it's a rage that runs through the entire family.

Trim
The company is getting impatient. Let the entertainment begin.

CURTAIN

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