

The Scandalous Marriage of Capitano Fortunato

A Commedia dell'Arte play in five acts

Characters

Pantalone: A wealthy Venetian merchant, who is often shown to be miserly and obsessed with his money.

Dottore: A pedantic and bombastic scholar, who often gets himself into trouble by overestimating his own intelligence.

Capitano Fortunato: A boisterous, braggart soldier who is more fond of boasting about his exploits than actually engaging in combat. He is the play's male lover.

Isabella: Pantalone's beautiful, intelligent daughter and the play's female lover. She is secretly in love with Capitano Fortunato but her father intends for her to marry Dottore.

Arlecchino: Pantalone's witty and nimble servant, who loves mischief and causing confusion.

Colombina: Isabella's crafty maid, in love with Arlecchino.

Brighella: An opportunistic and deceitful servant of Dottore.

Pulcinella: A mischievous hunchback who appears out of nowhere causing trouble and hilarity.

Scenario

ACT I

Scene 1: Pantalone and Dottore are in the lavish office of the merchant's home. Pantalone enthusiastically proposes the marriage between Dottore and Isabella. He emphasizes the social advantages of this union, highlighting Dottore's knowledge and prestige. Dottore agrees, eager for the dowry that would accompany such a match.

Scene 2: In Pantalone's kitchen, Arlecchino stumbles in, breathless from eavesdropping. He shares what he heard with Isabella and Colombina. Isabella is upset and reveals her love for Capitano Fortunato. Colombina, protective and cunning, vows to help Isabella.

Scene 3: Capitano Fortunato is in the town square, surrounded by a crowd, as he wildly gestures and brags about his adventures in far-off lands. Pulcinella disrupts the scene, mocking Fortunato's stories and evoking laughter from the crowd. This leads to a comic chase sequence around the square, with Pulcinella barely escaping Fortunato's wrath.

ACT II

Scene 1: Colombina and Arlecchino, huddled in a corner of the courtyard, plot a ruse. They decide to make Pantalone believe that Dottore has squandered his money on gambling and luxurious pursuits.

Scene 2: Pulcinella is roped into the scheme, agreeing to pose as a debt collector. In a comedic side plot, Arlecchino decides to send Dottore an anonymous love letter, supposedly from a wealthy widow, causing further confusion.

Scene 3: Pulcinella, dressed as the debt collector, publicly confronts Dottore about his fabricated debts. He exaggerates the sum, causing Pantalone to reconsider his daughter's engagement to a seemingly indebted man.

ACT III

Scene 1: The grand feast, the lively mood changes to one of relief and joy as Pantalone announces the cancellation of the wedding, and Capitano Fortunato takes this opportunity to propose to Isabella.

Scene 2: The festivities take a comedic turn as Pulcinella initiates a hilarious food fight, resulting in a pie-faced Pantalone.

Scene 3: Post feast, the town square plays witness to Pulcinella and Arlecchino's victorious celebration. The atmosphere is one of accomplishment and anticipation for the wedding.

ACT IV

Scene 1: Fortunato, under Arlecchino's advice, woos Isabella with exaggerated gestures and proclamations of love. Unbeknownst to them, Brighella witnesses this and rushes to tell Pantalone, hoping to gain a reward.

Scene 2: Dottore confronts Pulcinella about the debt, leading to a comedic display of physical humor. Pulcinella, fearing Dottore's wrath, admits the debt was a ruse, leaving Dottore both relieved and furious.

Scene 3: Pantalone confronts Isabella and Capitano Fortunato, resulting in a dramatic argument. The tension is diffused when Arlecchino and Colombina reveal their scheme and Dottore's deception.

ACT V

Scene 1: Pantalone's office is once again the setting for another serious discussion, this time with Pantalone and Dottore reflecting on the events and the triumph of love.

Scene 2: The town square is bustling with energy and the buzz of everyday life. Arlecchino and Colombina are seated by a fountain, engrossed in a discussion. They are busy planning a surprise for the wedding of Isabella and Capitano Fortunato.

Scene 3: The interior of a grand church, beautifully decorated for a wedding. The guests are seated, waiting in anticipation. Pantalone, Arlecchino, Dottore, Pulcinella, and Colombina are among the crowd, their faces lit with joy.

Script**ACT I**

Scene 1: The Proposal: *PANTALONE, an old merchant, is tidying his papers on a large mahogany desk. DOTTORE, a pompous, slightly deluded scholar, enters wearing his usual pretentious academic attire.*

PANTALONE: *(Pats Dottore on the back)* Ah, Dottore, you're just in time! Come, sit, sit. I've something of utmost importance to discuss!

DOTTORE: *(Seats himself, puffing up his chest)* Indeed, Pantalone? You've piqued my curiosity!

PANTALONE: *(Laughs)* Good, good. You see, Dottore, we've both made our marks on society. I, as a merchant, and you as a scholar. Yet, what could solidify our legacy more than a union of our households?

DOTTORE: *(Intrigued)* Hmm, interesting, Pantalone. And who do you propose should lead this union?

PANTALONE: *(Chuckles)* You, dear Dottore! I'm thinking of a marriage, a marriage between you and my beautiful daughter, Isabella.

DOTTORE: *(Surprised)* Isabella? The flower of Venice?

PANTALONE: *(Nods)* Yes, the very same. Think of it, Dottore. Your vast knowledge, coupled with Isabella's beauty and charm... it would be the talk of Venice, even all of Italy!

DOTTORE: *(Stroking his chin)* A marriage of intellect and beauty... But Pantalone, what of the dowry? I am, after all, a man of learned status, not of boundless wealth.

PANTALONE: *(Laughs heartily)* Ah, Dottore! That's the best part. Isabella comes with a generous dowry. Think of the benefits: Prestige, social standing, wealth... Isn't it a perfect match?

DOTTORE: *(His eyes light up)* A generous dowry, you say? Oh, how the stars align, Pantalone! My knowledge and prestige, her beauty and charm... and of course, the generous dowry. Yes, I am in agreement. This union is beneficial indeed!

PANTALONE: *(Claps hands together)* Magnificent, Dottore! This calls for a celebration.

As PANTALONE rises to fetch some wine, leaving the audience in anticipation of the comedy that will ensue.

(End Act I Scene 1)

Scene 2: The Revelation: *ARLECCHINO, the dim-witted and agile servant, stumbles into Pantalone's kitchen, breathless. ISABELLA, a beautiful and strong-willed woman, and COLOMBINA, a shrewd and resourceful maid, look up from their chores.*

ARLECCHINO: *(Panting)* Ladies, ladies! You won't believe what I just heard!

ISABELLA: *(Sighs)* What now, Arlecchino? Did you overhear another ghost story?

ARLECCHINO: *(Shaking his head)* No, no! It's about you, Isabella, and... and... Dottore!

Lazzo: *In his excitement, Arlecchino backs into a cabinet, knocking it over and sending dishes crashing to the floor.*

COLOMBINA: *(Rolls her eyes)* Out with it, Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO: *(Nods, catching his breath)* Pantalone... Pantalone is arranging a marriage between Isabella and Dottore!

ISABELLA: *(Stands up, shocked)* Dottore? But... but...

COLOMBINA: *(Concerned, she grabs Isabella's hand)* Isabella? What's wrong?

ISABELLA: *(Hesitates, then confesses)* I... I'm in love with Capitano Fortunato. Not Dottore.

COLOMBINA: *(Eyes widen, then she smiles knowingly)* Ah, the Capitano... Isabella, worry not. We'll figure something out.

ARLECCHINO: *(Scratches his head)* But... but what about the marriage?

COLOMBINA: *(Pats Arlecchino's cheek)* Leave it to me, Arlecchino. We'll make sure Isabella marries the man of her dreams, not some pompous Dottore.

ISABELLA: *(Smiles tearfully)* Thank you, Colombina. I knew I could count on you.

(End Act I Scene 2)

Scene 3: The Mockery: *CAPITANO FORTUNATO, a braggart soldier, stands in the middle of the town square, surrounded by a crowd of onlookers. He is gesticulating wildly, recounting tales of his grand adventures. PULCINELLA, a wily trickster, sneaks into the crowd.*

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Waving his arms)* ...and there I was, facing a horde of barbarians, outnumbered ten to one...

PULCINELLA: *(Interrupts loudly)* Ten to one? I heard it was one to ten, and that one was a small child!

(The crowd bursts into laughter. CAPITANO FORTUNATO, fuming, turns to face PULCINELLA.)

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Pointing at Pulcinella)* You! You dare mock the great Capitano Fortunato!

PULCINELLA: *(Bows theatrically)* Indeed, I do, Capitano. It's quite a fun pastime!

(More laughter from the crowd. CAPITANO FORTUNATO, enraged, lunges at PULCINELLA.)

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Shouting)* You insolent fool!

(A comedic chase ensues, with PULCINELLA leading CAPITANO FORTUNATO around the square, much to the delight of the crowd. PULCINELLA narrowly avoids CAPITANO FORTUNATO's clutches time and again, all while making faces and cracking jokes at his expense.)

PULCINELLA: *(Running)* Ah, Capitano! A bit slow on your feet, are we?

Lazzo: Pulcinella mimics Capitano Fortunato's over-the-top arm waving, but trips over a stool and tumbles into the crowd, causing an eruption of laughter.

(End Act I)

ACT II

Scene 1: The Conspiracy: *Night. In the quiet, dimly lit corner of Pantalone's courtyard, COLOMBINA and ARLECCHINO are huddled together, faces lit by a flickering lantern. They appear secretive and mischievous.*

COLOMBINA: *(Whispering intently)* Arlecchino, we must act swiftly. This marriage between Isabella and Dottore cannot happen. We need to craft a tale that will turn Pantalone against Dottore.

ARLECCHINO: *(Nods, scratching his head)* A tale, you say? What kind of tale?

COLOMBINA: *(Smirking)* What is Pantalone's greatest weakness?

ARLECCHINO: *(Pauses, then grins)* Money! He loves his money more than anything in the world!

COLOMBINA: *(Tapping Arlecchino's forehead)* Exactly! So we shall concoct a story that Dottore has squandered all his money on gambling, fine wines, and opulent clothing.

ARLECCHINO: *(Laughing quietly)* Oh, Colombina, you're wickedly brilliant! But how will we make Pantalone believe us?

COLOMBINA: (*Leaning in closer*) We'll need to find some "evidence." Fake gambling debts, perhaps, or a lavish item that could be Dottore's. Something to make the lie believable.

ARLECCHINO: (*Rubbing his hands together*) Oh, this is going to be fun! Dottore won't know what hit him.

COLOMBINA: (*Serious*) This isn't just for fun, Arlecchino. It's for love. We're doing this for Isabella.

ARLECCHINO: (*Nods solemnly*) Right, for Isabella. We'll make it work, Colombina.

COLOMBINA: (*Smiles*) I knew I could count on you.

(They shake hands, sealing their agreement. Their faces, lit by the soft glow of the lantern, reflect determination and excitement as the curtain falls, leaving the audience in suspense of the plot to unfold.)

(End Act II Scene 1)

Scene 2: The Ploy: PULCINELLA, ARLECCHINO, and COLOMBINA meet in Arlecchino's room which is cluttered with various objects. There's an air of mischief as they discuss their devious plot.

COLOMBINA: (*Grinning*) Pulcinella, we need your help. We have a job that requires your... unique talents.

PULCINELLA: (*Raises an eyebrow*) Oh? And what would that be?

ARLECCHINO: (*Grinning*) You, dear friend, will be our formidable debt collector!

PULCINELLA: (*Laughs*) A debt collector? That sounds entertaining! Who's the unfortunate debtor?

COLOMBINA: (*Smiling*) Dottore.

PULCINELLA: (*Laughs louder*) Oh, this is too good! Count me in.

Lazzo: Pulcinella practices his stern debt collector's voice but is startled by his own reflection in a mirror, falling backward onto a pile of pillows.
(As they continue their plotting, ARLECCHINO pulls out a sheet of paper and a quill.)

ARLECCHINO: (*Whispering to himself*) Now, how to craft a love letter...

COLOMBINA: (*Glancing at Arlecchino*) What are you up to now?

ARLECCHINO: (*Grins*) A little side plot. A love letter from a "wealthy widow" to our dear Dottore.

PULCINELLA: (*Guffaws*) Arlecchino, you devil! This is getting better by the minute!

COLOMBINA: (*Laughs*) Just make sure it's believable, Arlecchino. We can't afford any slip-ups.

ARLECCHINO: (*Nods, determined*) Leave it to me, Colombina.

(*The trio, lost in laughter and whispers, continue their plotting.*)

(*End ACT II Scene 2*)

Scene 3: The Confrontation: PULCINELLA, garbed in the sombre attire of a debt collector, struts into the town square, where DOTTORE is in conversation with PANTALONE. A crowd, including ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA who are watching from a distance, begins to gather.

PULCINELLA: (*Loudly*) Dottore! I seek audience with you. You have debts that demand payment!

DOTTORE: (*Startled*) Debts? I have no debts!

PULCINELLA: (*Raises an eyebrow*) Oh? Shall we discuss the matter in the open, or would you prefer a more private setting?

DOTTORE: (*Defiant*) Speak here! I have nothing to hide.

PULCINELLA: (*Smirking*) Very well. You owe a large sum from your lavish expenses: the games of chance, the expensive wine, the fine clothes...and what is this?! (*He picks up a letter from the ground near Dottore's feet and opens it.*) You seem to have dropped a love letter from a wealthy widow, Dottore!

DOTTORE: (*Sputtering*) This...this is preposterous!

PANTALONE: (*Alarmed*) How much does he owe?

PULCINELLA: (*Loudly*) An amount far beyond what a reasonable man would consider a fortune.

(*Gasps from the crowd. PANTALONE appears distressed. DOTTORE looks as if he might faint.*)

PANTALONE: (*Stammering*) I...I need to reconsider...

DOTTORE: (*Pleading*) Pantalone, it's a lie! I swear!

PULCINELLA: (*Smirks*) Well, Dottore, prove it if you can.

(As DOTTORE stands in shock, the crowd disperses, whispering amongst themselves. PULCINELLA, ARLECCHINO, and COLOMBINA retreat into the shadows, satisfied with the day's work.)

(End ACT II)

ACT III

Scene 1: The Grand Feast: *The grand hall is filled with people. A lavish feast is spread across long tables, and the air is filled with music, laughter, and the clinking of glasses. PANTALONE steps forward, raising his glass for a toast, and the room falls silent.*

PANTALONE: *(Smiling)* My friends, thank you all for joining us this evening. I have an announcement to make. The marriage between my daughter, Isabella, and Dottore... *(Pauses, looking at the crowd)* ...has been cancelled.

(A gasp runs through the room. ISABELLA, sitting near PANTALONE, breathes a sigh of relief. ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA exchange triumphant smiles from the corner of the room.)

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Standing up)* Pantalone, if I may...

PANTALONE: *(Nods)* Capitano Fortunato, you may.

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Turning to Isabella)* Isabella, I've loved you from the moment I laid eyes on you. If you'll have me, I wish to make you my wife.

(The room falls silent, all eyes on ISABELLA.)

ISABELLA: *(Smiling)* Capitano Fortunato, I accept your proposal!

(The room erupts in applause and cheers. CAPITANO FORTUNATO and ISABELLA share a joyous embrace, while PANTALONE raises his glass in a toast. ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA celebrate from their corner, their mission accomplished.)

(End ACT III Scene 1)

Scene 2: The Festive Fracas: *The hall is abuzz with joy and laughter as the festivities continue. Music plays, glasses clink, and everyone revels in the merry atmosphere. Suddenly, PULCINELLA, with a wicked grin, picks up a creamy tart from the table.*

PULCINELLA: *(Grinning widely)* May I have your attention, please!

(The room quiets down, everyone's attention drawn to PULCINELLA. With a theatrical flourish, he throws the tart high into the air. The crowd gasps as the tart descends, landing squarely on PANTALONE's face.)

PANTALONE: (*Stuttering, pie dripping from his face*) Wha...What in the...?!

(*Laughter fills the room, and suddenly more food takes flight. ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA join in, dodging flying pastries and tossing their own. The grand feast has turned into a grand food fight, with even the usually dignified DOTTORE throwing a custard pie at PULCINELLA.*)

PULCINELLA: (*Laughing as he wipes custard from his face*) Well played, Dottore!

(*The room is filled with laughter and joy, even PANTALONE manages a chuckle as he wipes pie from his face. As the curtain falls, the audience is left laughing at the unexpected, yet delightful, chaos.*)

(*End ACT III Scene 2*)

Scene 3: The Victorious Celebration: PULCINELLA and ARLECCHINO, covered in food and grinning widely, stumble into the town square. The remnants of the food fight still stick to their clothes, but they don't seem to mind. Their faces gleam with victory and the promise of a joyous wedding to come.

PULCINELLA: (*Raising an imaginary toast*) To the masterminds of the grandest ruse!

ARLECCHINO: (*Returns the toast*) To a successful plot and a happy ending!

(*They clink their imaginary glasses together and fall into laughter. The square echoes with their triumphant laughter, their victory infecting the space with an air of joyous accomplishment.*)

PULCINELLA: (*Grinning*) I must admit, Arlecchino, your love letter idea was brilliant. The look on Dottore's face was priceless!

ARLECCHINO: (*Laughs*) And your performance as the debt collector was sublime, Pulcinella!

(*They share another laugh, reflecting on their successful ruse and the hilarity it caused.*)

PULCINELLA: (*Looking towards the horizon*) Now, onto the wedding. I can't wait to see what surprises that brings!

ARLECCHINO: (*Grins*) Indeed, Pulcinella. Indeed.

(*As they celebrate their victory, the stage is illuminated with an atmosphere of accomplishment and anticipation for the wedding. The curtain falls on their laughter, leaving the audience eagerly awaiting the next act.*)

(*End ACT III*)

ACT IV

Scene 1: The Romantic Scheme: *CAPITANO FORTUNATO, guided by ARLECCHINO, steps onto the courtyard where ISABELLA sits, reading. He starts enacting ARLECCHINO's advice, his gestures grandiose and his words flamboyant. Hidden behind a nearby tree, BRIGHELLA watches the scene unfold.*

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(In a grandiose tone)* Isabella, my love for you is as vast as the seas I have traversed, as majestic as the mountains I have scaled!

ISABELLA: *(Giggling)* Oh, Fortunato!

ARLECCHINO: *(Whispering from the sideline)* Now, kneel and take her hand, Capitano!

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: *(Kneeling and taking ISABELLA's hand)* Your hand, dear Isabella, is the compass that guides this weary traveller's home.

(BRIGHELLA, seeing an opportunity, darts away from the tree to find PANTALONE.)

BRIGHELLA: *(Running onto the stage, panting)* Pantalone! Pantalone!

PANTALONE: *(Surprised)* Brighella, what is it?

BRIGHELLA: *(Grinning)* I have news, Pantalone, news about your daughter and Capitano Fortunato!

(PANTALONE raises an eyebrow, his interest piqued. BRIGHELLA grins wider, the promise of a reward dancing in his eyes.)

(End ACT IV Scene 1)

Scene 2: The Confrontation Revealed: *DOTTORE storms onto the stage, furiously seeking PULCINELLA, who is trying to inconspicuously blend in with the background.*

DOTTORE: *(Furious)* Pulcinella! You will answer for this outrageous claim of my debt!

PULCINELLA: *(Nervously)* Dottore, I have no idea what you're talking about.

DOTTORE: *(Points at PULCINELLA)* You, the debt collector! You publicly shamed me!

Lazzo: *PULCINELLA, in an attempt to escape, begins to dodge around the stage, turning the confrontation into a slapstick chase sequence, evoking laughter from the onlookers.*

PULCINELLA: *(Running)* I admit it, Dottore! It was all a ruse!

DOTTORE: *(Pauses, shocked)* A...a ruse?

PULCINELLA: (*Nods, panting*) Yes, a ruse! You have no debt!

(*DOTTORE, a mix of relief and fury washes over his face. He huffs and puffs, struggling to formulate a response. PULCINELLA, taking advantage of the moment, dashes off stage, leaving a stunned DOTTORE behind.*)

(*End ACT IV Scene 2*)

Scene 3: The Confrontation and the Revelation: *PANTALONE storms into the courtyard where CAPITANO FORTUNATO is still wooing ISABELLA. His anger is palpable as he interrupts their moment.*

PANTALONE: (*Furious*) Enough of this nonsense!

CAPITANO FORTUNATO: (*Surprised*) Pantalone!

ISABELLA: (*Worried*) Father...

PANTALONE: (*Pointing at Capitano*) You! You are taking advantage of my daughter's innocence!

(*The situation is tense, with an argument threatening to break out. Suddenly, ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA burst onto the scene.*)

ARLECCHINO: (*Breathless*) Pantalone! Wait!

COLOMBINA: (*Joining in*) It's not what you think!

PANTALONE: (*Confused*) What do you mean?

ARLECCHINO: (*Grinning*) We mean that there was never any debt!

COLOMBINA: (*Nods*) And Dottore... he was part of the ruse!

(*PANTALONE, ISABELLA, and CAPITANO FORTUNATO are left in stunned silence. The revelation diffuses the tension, leaving them in disbelief as ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA bask in the success of their elaborate scheme.*)

(*End ACT IV*)

ACT V

Scene 1: The Reflection: *PANTALONE and DOTTORE, back in PANTALONE's lavish office, are seated across from each other. Their faces carry the weight of the recent events, their eyes reflecting the wisdom gained from the unexpected turn of events.*

PANTALONE: *(Sighs)* This entire ordeal, Dottore, it's been a whirlwind.

DOTTORE: *(Nods)* Indeed, Pantalone. It seems we have been outwitted by our own children.

PANTALONE: *(Reflecting)* Perhaps... but isn't that the charm of youth? They dared where we dared not. They fought for love where we sought convenience.

DOTTORE: *(Agrees)* True, Pantalone. Maybe we have much to learn from them. They've shown us that love triumphs over all, even our plans and schemes.

(They both fall into silence, deep in thought. The setting becomes an allegory of their introspection, the grandeur of the office juxtaposed with their newfound humility. The act ends on this sombre note, paving the way for a hopeful resolution.)

(End ACT V Scene 1)

Scene 2: The Wedding Planners: *The lively town square bustles with people going about their daily tasks. ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA sit by a fountain, engrossed in an animated discussion. Sketches of wedding plans are spread out before them.*

ARLECCHINO: *(Excited)* And then, Colombina, we could have doves released as Capitano and Isabella say their vows!

COLOMBINA: *(Laughs)* Arlecchino, you and your grand ideas! I like it. Let's also have a band playing their favorite melodies.

ARLECCHINO: *(Nods eagerly)* Excellent idea! And we could decorate the entire square with flowers and lanterns.

COLOMBINA: *(Smiling)* Yes, Arlecchino. Let's make it a wedding they'll never forget.

(ARLECCHINO and COLOMBINA continue their planning, their excitement and laughter mixing with the everyday noise of the town square. The stage buzzes with the promise of a grand celebration, a fitting tribute to the triumph of love.)

(End ACT V Scene 2)

Scene 3: The Wedding: *The grand church is aglow with flowers and candlelight. The guests are seated in anticipation, their murmurs creating a soft buzz. Among the crowd, PANTALONE, ARLECCHINO, DOTTORE, PULCINELLA, and COLOMBINA are noticeable, their faces lit with joy and excitement.*

PANTALONE: *(Whispers)* What a glorious day!

ARLECCHINO: *(Nods, smiling)* Truly, Pantalone. Love triumphs indeed!

DOTTORE: *(Chuckles softly)* I must admit, this is far better than any scheme we could have contrived.

PULCINELLA: *(Grins)* And we get to enjoy the feast without any ruse or antics!

COLOMBINA: *(Laughs quietly)* Just wait until the doves, Pulcinella!

(The crowd hushes as the wedding march begins to play. The atmosphere fills with anticipation, joy, and warmth, setting the stage for the grand conclusion of the tale of love and schemes.)

(The End)

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