

Cloak and Dagger, a Comedy of Great Loves and Mistaken Identities in One Act

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Dramatis Personae

Pantalone, old merchant, in love with Beatrice
Isabella, Pantalone's daughter, in love with Virginio
Brighella, Pantalone's scheming servant

Dottore, doctor of law and medicine
Virginio, Dottore's son, in love with Isabella
Spinetta, Dottore's servant

Beatrice, a courtesan

Properties

an old cloak, two scrolls.

Beatrice enters, complains about high cost of running business in this town and boring clientele, leaves.

Isabella and Virginio enter, proclaim their love for each other, leave.

Pantalone and Brighella enter, Pantalone slightly disheveled. Talks animatedly about Beatrice, and how great, yet expensive she is. Laments the expenses. Figures out that if he marries Beatrice, he can get the benefits for free. Only Beatrice is a shrewd businesswoman, and in order to reap the full benefits of such marriage, he needs an iron clad marriage contract. He should go to Dottore, who has a law degree from the University of Bologna, and get one! And then, propose! Brighella can't wait until Pantalone is done pontificating so he can go to Beatrice's. Brighella is pissed that Beatrice may be getting married, and Pantalone is just a greedy old man who wants Beatrice all to himself.

Pantalone and Brighella leave.

Dottore and Spinetta enter arguing. Spinetta wants a raise, or, to be precise, an actual salary. Dottore berates Spinetta and lets her know that the servants are a dime a dozen, and for a position at his, Dottore's, household, people would line up around the block. Spinetta argues that she basically runs the household and his business, and she better get better compensated, or she quits, and leaves.

Dottore talks to himself, saying that Spinetta can't quit – where would she go?

Pantalone enters. Tells Dottore that he knows about a great woman. She is a bit older, but experienced, has great business acumen, skilled in many things, and knows how to keep a gentleman content., etc. etc. Dottore assumes he talks about Spinetta, and agrees. When Pantalone brings up things specific to Beatrice, Dottore acts surprised, but agrees (oh, she does that, too? I never knew!). Pantalone asks Dottore's help in proposing, and maybe writing a contract.

Dottore becomes more and more antagonistic. He thinks Pantalone wants to steal his servant, and the marriage is a scheme to not pay her at all, which is brilliant, and he should have thought of it himself! He is very agitated, and tells Pantalone that he can't have her, in fact, he, Dottore will have her all for himself.

Pantalone assumes Dottore talks about Beatrice, and gets furious. They part as bitter rivals, convinced they are after the same woman.

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Pantalone leaves

Spinetta enters, Dottore, still furious, berates Spinetta for plotting behind his back, and that she is about to make the worst mistake of her life, and that would no let him have her, in fact he, Dottore, would have her himself. Spinetta is very perplexed, and leaves alarmed.

Virginio enters, talks to Dottore, leaves convinced both Dottore and Pantalone are wooing Spinetta.

Virginio and Dottore leave

Pantalone and Brighella enter

Isabella enters, remains unnoticed

Pantalone vents to Brighella that that good for nothing Dottore is after Beatrice himself! Brighella sympathizes, but, as a Beatrice's customer, is not happy about the turn of events.

Isabella, who came in to talk to her father about her won marriage to Virginio, overhears the conversation and leaves alarmed and unnoticed.

Pantalone is furious, and says his only chance with Beatrice is to get Dottore out of the way before he does something horrible, such as slip Beatrice a love potion. He should just eliminate Dottore outright! And Brighella is just the man to do it. They argue about the price. Brighella agrees to eliminate Dottore.

Pantalone and Brighella leave

Enter Virginio and Isabella.

Isabella is concerned that her father, Pantalone is getting married, and that she will have a stepmother, and that with Pantalone's marriage, their own wedding will be postponed. Virginio basically repeats the story. Both are sad.

Isabella leaves

Spinetta enters, catching the end of conversation.

Spinetta Virginio about the meaning of it. Virginio is angry at Spinetta, and explains that now that Dottore and Pantalone both woo Spinetta, his own marriage is postponed.

Virginio leaves

Brighella enters

Spinetta is freaked out that she is being pursued by both old men.

Brighella is pissed that both Dottore and Pantalone are after Beatrice.

Spinetta bumps into Brighella and asks him to help her – both Dottore and Pantalone are after her. Brighella listens to her, and agrees to help her – for a price. Spinetta has nothing to pay him with - she doesn't even get a salary! Brighella explains that there are many other ways a woman can pay a man, and gets beaten up with a broom. After which he elaborates on those many ways, for example – laundry! Spinetta agrees to do Brighella's laundry if he helps her. Brighella, who only has one outfit, gives it to Spinetta to wash, and she gives him an old cloak to wear, while the laundry is done.

Spinetta leaves with Brighella's laundry.

Enter Dottore

Dottore is fuming about Pantalone, and seeing how powerful, ruthless, and cunning Pantalone is, Dottore has no chance,

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and in order not to lose Spinetta, he will just have to eliminate Pantalone. He just needs to find somebody to do it. Sees Brighella in a cloak and does not recognize him, but greets him. Brighella plays along. Dottore hires cloaked Brighella to eliminate Dottore, they haggle about the price.

Dottore leaves
Spinetta enters

Spinetta drops of the laundry, wants to know if Brighella has a plan. Brighella explains that with two such powerful men as Dottore and Pantalone fighting over her, she just has to wait it out, and let them destroy each other. Brighella, knows just the way to do it, but he needs the cloak. Spinetta lets Brighella keep the cloak.

Both leave
Brighella, without the cloak and Pantalone enter

Brighella explains that Dottore just hired a killer to get Pantalone out of the way. Pantalone is outraged at such treachery (He thought he and Dottore were the best friends!). The price is renegotiated – as now Brighella needs to deal with both the Dottore and the assassin.

Both leave

Cloaked Brighella and Dottore enter

Brighella explains that Pantalone just hired his own assassin. Dottore, after haggling, ups the price.

Both leave

Beatrice and Brighella enter.

Brighella explains that both Dottore and Pantalone are after her and her business, but he, Brighella, can help her, for a price. Beatrice explains that the costs of running business are very high, and her wealth is greatly exaggerated. Brighella repeats his speech about many other ways a woman can pay a man, Beatrice says she'll think about it.

Brighella leaves, encouraged.
Isabella enters

Isabella berates Beatrice, calls her a selfish old woman, who doesn't care about others, and now that Pantalone is marrying her, her own marriage to Virginio is cancelled!

Isabella leaves in tears.
Spinetta enters

Spinetta berates Beatrice for corrupting all old men in town, and not finishing the job – if she were a real courtesan, the dirty old men in town would be after Beatrice, and leave her, Spinetta, alone, and that Beatrice should either brush up on her seduction, or leave town!

Spinetta leaves.
Virginio enters

Virginio berates Beatrice for doing a shoddy job as a courtesan – what kind of courtesan is she, if even his father, and Pantalone himself are after his father's servant woman? Even he, Virginio, would know how to do better!

Virginio leaves.
Dottore enters

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Dottore berates Beatrice for lowering morals in town, and that now, with her influence, even his own servant woman is not safe from depredations of dirty old men.

Dottore leaves
Pantalone enters

Pantalone declares his devotion to very perplexed Beatrice, talks about the barriers to their happiness, including that lecherous old man Dottore, but that he, Pantalone, will take care of things, and that Beatrice shouldn't worry about it one bit.

Pantalone leaves, leaving Beatrice alone and very confused.

(Brighella meanwhile goes to Pantalone as himself and to Dottore as the cloaked man, and the price is upped again.)

Virginio and Isabella enter

They decide to elope, and realizing that they need help, decide to turn to Beatrice , despite yelling at her earlier, since she is the only neutral person left in town.

Beatrice enters

Beatrice, who is the only person other than Brighella to get the full picture, says she will help, but needs some help from Virginio's writing skills.

(Brighella meanwhile goes to Pantalone as himself and to Dottore as the cloaked man, and the price is upped again.)

Dottore laments the high price of human life, and how it's just impossible to find an honest murderer nowadays.

Dottore and Brighella leave
Beatrice and Pantalone enter

Beatrice and Pantalone discuss potential marriage. Beatrice says that she wouldn't mind marrying Pantalone, but she doesn't want to deal with Isabella, who can't stand her. If only he could get Isabella out of the house somehow, then there would be no barriers to their happiness. Pantalone, blind with lust and greed, agrees, and signs a marriage contract, which Beatrice had conveniently prepared, giving away Isabella to Virginio.

Then he proposes to Beatrice and gives her the contract he had prepared. Beatrice takes it, promising to sign it next time Pantalone visits her. Encouraged Pantalone promises to be there ASAP.

Beatrice leaves.
Brighella enters.

Brighella explains that Dottore upped the price, etc. etc. At this point Pantalone, encouraged by how well things went with Beatrice gets pissed and start yelling about outrageous prices, and how the murderers and assassins have no decency, and how he, Pantalone, will just have to off Dottore himself, because he can't afford to hire anybody anymore.

Brighella runs away scared
Pantalone storms out

Pantalone and Dottore enter
Brighella enters unseen

Very upset Pantalone runs into furious Dottore, and they start fighting about how uncollegiate it is to overbid the other's price. In the course of the fight it becomes clear, that Dottore is interested in keeping Spinetta as a servant, and Pantalone

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wants to marry Beatrice. With the subject of contention out of the way, they laugh at how silly it was for them to hire someone to off one another, when in the name of their long-standing friendship they're ready to do it for free, or, at least at cost. They leave together, best of friends again, discussing all the horrible things they are willing to do to each other, and how economically.

Brighella, overhears, realizes his scheme is busted, and runs to Beatrice hoping to collect.

Beatrice and Brighella enter

Beatrice convinces Brighella to do her a favor, and run to Pantalone and deliver a signed marriage contract.

Beatrice and Brighella leave

Enter Pantalone and Dottore

Pantalone and Dottore are still discussing cheap murder options.

Enter ecstatic Virginio and Isabella.

Virginio and Isabella announce that they are married! Dottore is a bit taken aback at the news of the marriage, but as long as he gets to keep his servant, he is willing to let Virginio go.

Enter Spinetta, cautiously

Virginio and Isabella explain the situation to her, and Spinetta is relieved.

Brighella enters

He gives a paper to Pantalone, explains it's a marriage contract that Beatrice signed. Pantalone signs it as well, without looking.

Spinetta berates Brighella for conning her into doing his laundry, and cheating her out of the cloak. Brighella points out that none of the old men are after her, so as far as he is concerned, he held up his part of the bargain. Spinetta demands the cloak back. At this point, Pantalone and Dottore realize Brighella played them against each other and try to catch him. Brighella leaves cloak behind and runs away.

Brighella leaves

Beatrice enters

Pantalone tries to hug/kiss her, Beatrice demands money. Pantalone objects, seeing as the marriage contract is signed. Beatrice insists. Pantalone reads the iron clad contract, which states that Pantalone has to pay market prices for spousal duties, and pay for upkeep of Beatrice's establishment, etc, etc, etc. He, amazed, says that it's not the contract he gave to Beatrice, wonders if he can get out of it – he can't, as all the loopholes are covered. He wonders who wrote it, and finally comes to the end, where it is signed, “Virginio, Esq”.

Everybody stares at Virginio, who goes, “ Oh, didn't you all know?” Isabella screams, “ I married a lawyer!” and faints.

The End.

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