

THE POWER OF NEGATIVE THINKING

By Luceta di Cosimo

(with many thanks to Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Molière, and Scala)

Pantalone, a wealthy merchant

Isabella, his daughter

Benedetta, her servant

Flavio, his son, Lelio's best friend

Pedrolino, his servant

Dottore, a wealthy professional

Lelio, his son, Flavio's best friend

Scapino, his servant

Capitano, former mercenary, captain of the police, Vittoria's lover

Arlecchino, his servant

Coviello, a traveling merchant,

Flaminia, his daughter

Nespola, her servant

Vittoria, a rich widow, Capitano's lover

Niccolina, **Artemisia**, and **Truffaldina**, gypsy fortune tellers.

Outside Pantalone's house

Pantalone, Isabella, Benedetta.

Pantalone welcomes his daughter back from studying abroad with the best teachers in Europe and talks about her marriage. Isabella doesn't want to get married. She thinks all men are stupid: just take a look at her bother, all her does is chasing skirts, dueling, and wasting money.

Pantalone exits.

Benedetta begs Isabella to consider marrying someone for her sake, - as she is Isabella's servant and companion, she can't marry until Isabella does. Benedetta craves her freedom. (*Maybe this is a condition of a contract Benedetta has with Pantalone?*)

Benedetta and Isabella exit

City Street

Coviello, Flaminia and Nespola enter

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Coviello talks about moving to a new city, and establishing his new trade house here with two of his old University friends. Leaves Flaminia and Nespola to go to the house he rented for them, while he goes to the house of Pantalone to follow up on some business arrangements. Flaminia and Nespola are lost looking for Vittoria's house. (Maybe they have a map? Argue about asking for directions?)

Coviello leaves.

Flavio and Pedrolino enter

Flavio talks about love – there are so many worthy objects! He is in love all the time, all women are beautiful and wonderful and all are worthy of his love. Flavio establishes that he is Pantalone's son.

Pedrolino laments that his master wastes all his considerable allowance on women, and Pedrolino goes hungry. He tries to dissuade his master from the notion that all women are worthy of love and tries to convince Flavio to think more like his best friend Lelio. Lelio is logical and calculating and never falls in love.

Pedrolino convinces Flavio to embrace Lelio's system of negative thinking – if a woman is curvaceous – she's fat, if slender – skinny, generous – spendthrift, good with money - calculating and cold, etc. etc.

Flavio notices Flaminia and Nespola. Flavio instantly falls for Flaminia. Pedrolino tries to encourage his master to think negatively – Flavio can't, so Pedrolino hurls insults at Flaminia, who is speechless. Nespola takes offense to that and answers on her lady's behalf. A shouting match between Nespola and Pedrolino ensues. Meanwhile Flavio and Flaminia obviously really like each other, but can't get in a word edgewise over their servants fighting on their behalf.

At the end of the scene, Flavio and Flaminia are smitten with each other, though they haven't even had a chance to talk.

Nespola and Pedrolino are both very satisfied with defending their masters' honor and also like each other quite a bit.

Flaminia and Nespola, Flavio and Pedrolino exit in different directions

Vittoria's house, which Coviello rented.

Flaminia and Nespola enter

They knock, *Vittoria enters*

Flaminia and Nespola introduce themselves to Vittoria who welcomes them to her house. Flaminia talks to Vittoria about a nice young man she just met, and that she believes she's in love. Vittoria says that used to believe in love before, but her first husband died, she is a widow, then she found love again, with a dashing mercenary captain, but her lover went missing in a war, so now she is all alone, love just doesn't last, and Flaminia, if she knows what good for her, will do exactly what Vittoria does, or her heart will be broken. Flaminia is impressed with Vittoria's

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worldliness and doesn't want to get her heart broken and agrees. They retire to rehearse making disdainful looks in the mirror.

All exit

City Street

Capitano and Arlecchino enter, Flavio and Pedrolino enter

Capitano, who is the city's new captain of the police, is searching for his long lost love. (Capitano introduces a catch phrase here that will identify him in the end.)

Flavio, who figured out where Flaminia lives, has decided to go and apologize.

Flavio and Capitano meet, greet each other, talk about their loves and what they are doing, and realize they are at the same house! A challenge!

Flavio accepts and asks Pedrolino to be his second. Pedrolino refuses to support violence and refuses to be a second (he's allergic?) So, Flavio instead wants Lelio to be his second. Capitano agrees, realizes he doesn't have a second. He is new in town and doesn't know anybody. The only person he knows is Arlecchino. Arlecchino is thrilled to be his second and promises to do a very, very good job.

Flavio and Capitano send Arlecchino to Lelio's house (Dottore's house, really) to tell Lelio that he is Flavio's second in a duel with Capitano, and to borrow a sword – and a fancy outfit - Capitano wants his second to look good! Arlecchino needs to bring Lelio back ASAP! Arlecchino is excited!!! He promises to do a very good job! (Fit in one more delivery of the Capitano's catch phrase.)

all exit

Dottore's house

Dottore, Lelio, and Scapino.

Dottore enters beating Scapino. Scapino is pissed because Lelio has told Dottore about Scapino's cheating and stealing. Scapino is upset because he thought he covered up his tracks really well this time. Lelio tells Scapino that he may fool Dottore, but he can never fool him, Lelio, for he has a superior intelligence and logic and therefore Scapino does not stand a chance.

Dottore has a letter from Coviello, his old University friend, saying that he is in town, staying at Vittoria's villa, and would like to meet with Dottore at Pantalone's house regarding an old business arrangement. Dottore is very excited tells Lelio it's very important and leaves.

Dottore tries to exit, and bumps into Arlecchino

Arlecchino enters

Arlecchino very earnestly and excitedly delivers his message bungling it horribly. Dottore and Scapino try to decipher it repeatedly with more and more hilarious results, until even Arlecchino is confused. At this point, Lelio miraculously somehow figures it all out.

Dottore is amazed and very concerned about the whole duel to the death business.

Scapino is pissed that Lelio once again proved just how smart he is.

Arlecchino is thrilled that finally someone understands him!

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Lelio, who is Flavio's second, does not fall in love. Ever. He thinks the whole thing is stupid and dumb. As Flavio is his best friend, he will stop this silly duel from happening and take care of everything, (thus saving his best friend's life, as Capitano is (probably) a better fighter), *and* reunite Capitano with Vittoria, *and* give Flavio a chance with Flaminia (Not that he believes in love, but it will keep Flavio out of trouble.)

Lelio sends Scapino to Pantalone's house to find Coviello

All exit

Pantalone's house

Scapino, Benedetta, Pantalone

(Scapino is a new servant at Dottore's – hired since Isabella and Benedetta went to University) Benedetta enters grumbling about having to do more shopping for her mistress. Scapino finds out from Benedetta, Isabella's servant, that indeed Isabella and Benedetta are back in town from University, Coviello is Pantalone's old University friend.. Coviello is currently in a business meeting with Pantalone. Coviello does have a daughter named Flaminia, and Flaminia and Nespola are staying at Vittoria's.

Scapino also finds out that Pantalone's daughter, Isabella, is brilliant, not interested in men (because they are boring), and Pantalone is desperate to convince her to marry (but does not say to whom since we know that Lelio and Isabella are already betrothed by their parents). (Scapino initially comes on too strong and creeps Benedetta out, but when they find they have something in common, she warms to him.)

Scapino finds himself falling for Benedetta, who flirts with him, but says she's basically stuck with Isabella as long as she's single, and as Isabella is going to be perpetually single, so Scapino has no chance.

Scapino vows to save her! They both crave their freedom from being servants and want to be their own masters. They promise to run away together.

He has a brilliant plan - he will make Lelio fall for Isabella and marry her. This way he will get his revenge on Lelio, by making him finally lose his wits, and will get Benedetta.

Benedetta is thrilled, and tells Scapino to talk to Pantalone. Benedetta exits to fetch Pantalone.

Pantalone enters with Benedetta

Pantalone enters annoyed at being distracted from his very important meeting by all the commotion in the servant quarter, recognizes Scapino and berates him as a dishonest rogue. Pantalone ushers Benedetta away.

Pantalone and Benedetta exit, Benedetta flirting with Scapino on her way out.

Scapino realizes that his plan has no chance of succeeding as long as Pantalone knows that Scapino is involved. He must find someone else to convince Pantalone to marry Isabella to Lelio.

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Niccolina, Artemisia, and Truffaldina enter

Niccolina, Artemisia and Truffaldina try to pick Scapino's pockets as they read his fortune, but Scapino knows their tricks. "Don't play a player." They do a "dance" of stealing each others' money bags. Scapino convinces the gypsies to be the match maker, and pitch his plan of marriage between Lelio and Isabella to Pantalone. If the gypsies refuse, he will turn them to the police .

Arlecchino enters, and aimlessly wanders about.

Scapino points out Arlecchino as the servant of the captain of the guard. The Gypsies are impressed by Arlecchino and are sufficiently impressed and intimidated and play along.
All exit.

Pantalone's house

Pantalone, Dottore and Coviello enter (doing the "It's great to be an old man" Conga line.

They begin a business meeting, discuss old dreams they will finally make come true. (Maybe a "Bucket List Club"? "Get rid of our children and retire." Buy an island together and fill it with beautiful women – maybe England?)

Niccolina, Artemisia and Truffaldina enter, sneaking to the side to eavesdrop on the old men.

The men reminisce about old times when they made lots of money with dishonest dealings. The gypsies crash the business meeting, speak in riddles and hints, and vague prose and verse. They promise Pantalone a match made in heaven for his daughter Isabella if he does exactly what they say. When he is doubtful, they vaguely hint and threaten with some non-specific stuff, which the vecchi interpret this as black mail for their own past shady deals.

Coviello and Dottore are scared and run away.

Pantalone runs away the other way

The gypsies run and dance after Dottore and Coviello

Pantalone's house

Pantalone enters

Calls Isabella

Isabella enters

Pantalone calls Isabella and tells her to stop unpacking and pack back up - she is going back to University, as her father is being successfully blackmailed by the gypsy fortune teller extortionists extraordinaire – unless she marries some mysterious stranger indicated by the gypsies.

Isabella refuses to marry, and says she would rather pack.

Pantalone exits

Lelio enters, inquiring about Coviello

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Lelio sees Isabella. Lelio knew Pantalone's daughter Isabella as a child, but she went away to study many years ago, and now she grew up into the exact opposite of her foolish brother Flavio – beautiful, smart, practical. They talk and Lelio finds her very smart and attractive. He showers her with compliments. She agrees with all of them. (yes, I know I am all that!) Lelio kinda loses it. Tries not to fall in love by applying his system of negative thinking and completely blows it, as he can't think anything bad about Isabella. In the end states that Isabella is probably not a very good person who may not like kittens. Isabella crushes him with a brief monologue and he drags himself away, calling for someone to help him.

Isabella exits

City Street Outside Pantalone's House

Lelio is still there

Dottore enters

Lelio bumps into Dottore and begs him to “help him” as he's in love. Dottore doesn't know what Lelio is talking about. Knowing that Lelio doesn't fall in love, Dottore feels he must be very ill. Anyway, Dottore states that there is no suit and no marriage, he must get to the police right away as someone very dangerous is blackmailing him! Dottore tries to appeal to usually brilliant Lelio, but Lelio's love soaked mind is useless.

Dottore yells for the police.

Arlecchino enters

Dottore recognizes Arlecchino, as the police Captain's servant, and asks him to lead him to Capitan.

All exit

Outside Vittoria's house

Flavio , Capitano, Pedrolino

Flavio and Capitano are wondering where Arlecchino went. As there is no Arlecchino and no Lelio, no one has a second, but the duel must go on.

Capitano and Flavio both try to enlist Pedrolino as a second, but there is only one of him and two of them. Flavio and Capitano decide to fight to determine who gets Pedrolino as a second, and Capitano explains to Pedrolino in great detail what an honor it is to be a second and, how in the best possible scenario, when Capitano and Flavio have both fallen, Pedrolino gets to fight himself and kill himself, too. Pedrolino is not buying it. He does not feel suicidal at all, in fact, he has a lot to live for, for example, there is a wonderful lady, the love of his life, right here in this house.

Capitano thinks Pedrolino is talking about Vittoria, Flavio thinks Pedrolino is talking about Flaminia, both gang up on Pedrolino, who screams to Nespola for help,

Nespola, Flaminia, Vittoria

Nespola and Flaminia and Vittoria hear the commotion, and are livid that the two bullies outside are trying to drive this poor fellow to suicide, and drag Pedrolino into the house.

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Flavio is trying to break into the house. Asks Capitano to help him. Capitano helps him. Vittoria yells for Police. Capitano yells that the Police are already here. Capitano says his catch phrase. Vittoria recognizes his voice, runs out and embraces Capitano as her long lost love, and falls into his arms.

Flavio meets Flaminia, and confesses his love for her and apologizes for threatening Pedrolino. Flaminia, who promised to do exactly what Vittoria does, falls into his arms.

Pedrolino hides behind Nespola. Pedrolino falls into Nespola's arms just like the two women just fell into their lovers' arms.

Coviello enters

Coviello screams for Nespola and Flaminia to run before the police get here.

Capitano informs, him, not leaving Vittoria's arms that the police are already here.

Dottore enters

Dottore runs in (somehow he lost Lelio and Arlecchino) screaming for police. Capitano repeats that the police are already here – more exasperated that no one seems to listen to him.

Pantalone enters

Pantalone runs after him screaming not to call the police, he will somehow convince Isabella to marry whoever the gypsies say. Coviello and Dottore react negatively to that (since it would screw up their secret plans to marry their own children off to each other).

Isabella and Benedetta enter

Isabella follows saying that she is all packed, and that she is definitely not marrying anyone. She's too smart for that.

Capitano, really wants to take things further, but seeing that he is getting no privacy, grabs Vittoria (picks her up dramatically) and runs off stage.

Capitano and Vittoria exit

Flavio and Flaminia (cause she does exactly what Vittoria does) follow with Flaminia jumping into Flavio's arms; Nespola and Pedrolino repeat the dramatic exit, but with Nespola trying to pick up Pedrolino.

Scapino and Arlecchino enter, dragging Lelio.

Pantalone tearfully explains to Dottore that the deal is off – He knows that Isabella and Lelio were promised to each other at birth, but since the blackmailing gypsies appeared, everything is off.

Scapino seeing that his scheme has backfired, drops to his knees and begs for mercy, explains that the gypsy fortune tellers actually tried to set up Lelio and Isabella, and confesses his revenge scheme – but only because he loves Benedetta.

Pantalone attacks Scapino, but Benedetta steps in between them - protecting Scapino and blocking Pantalone. She points out that Isabella and Lelio are a perfect match anyway and only a fool would believe a bunch of gypsies. Pantalone mulls this over as Benedetta grabs Scapino's arm and drags him off stage saying that they're running away together right now.

Benedetta and Scapino exit

Isabella, intrigued asks Dottore if his son is actually smart. Dottore confirms, but diagnoses him with temporary stupidity due to acute love attack. Isabella is flattered, warms up to Lelio, he gets better, and they walk off stage flirting and promising to show each other their diplomas.

Isabella and Lelio exit

The three vecchi are all happy now because their plan to marry their children off to each other so that they can retire has resolved itself happily for everyone. Dottore skips off stage the other way, very happy that the wedding is back on (The three vecchi exit with the “It's great to be an old man” conga line.)

Dottore, Pantalone, and Coviello exit

Vittoria's house

Arlecchino enters

Arlecchino is looking for Capitano, or pretty much anybody to tell them that he had delivered the message, and can't find anybody!

Niccolina, Artemisia and Truffaldina enter

They read Arlecchino's fortune, tell him that he will become the doge, the pope, and a baker. Arlecchino is very happy about the baker part, because he can eat the buns he wants!

And they all dance of stage.