

Esther T. Jones

Professor Brennan

Theatre 101

29 February 2012

Laurent, the Shadow

In the gutter again. To my great displeasure, this is hardly the first, or second time in the past year. How long has it been I wonder, since I've been made to lie in the filth of the street alongside the peasantry? Days fall very much by the wayside when one is concerned with survival. What I wouldn't give for a few paltry coins. Too much longer I fear and I shall shrivel and rot like the grapes in the field left alone too long. But wait, can it be? Ah oui, 'tis. The man who will lift me out of my misery and line my pockets with gold...

A fortnight has passed since I managed to catch the eye of Monsieur D. As of yet, the action is scarce. Many days now we have spent simply sitting and begging in the streets. He has a plan though, I am sure of it...

What a most despicable character! Why, if 'twere not for my higher goal I should never stoop to such a level. If I had not been there and witnessed it with my own eyes, I should scarcely believe what Monsieur D. has done. Just this very matin oui, we went to beg charity from the monastery, and whilst I captured the attention of the unfortunate pious men, that man got his hands on two – admittedly rather filthy – habits! He grinned at me in the most disturbing way and put an unkempt finger to his lips, motioning that he would slip out the back and for me to follow. Ah, mercy me, what else could I do?

Monsieur D. is quite the cunning man. For five days we have been stumbling around the different churches in la ville, each time finding a more wealthy, more exploitable location. I ask him after each mass as to the reason he does not stay, rather scurrying like a flea-infested rat back to his filthy streets. "Non, non, Laurent," he says, placing a grime covered hand on my habit – thankfully, the dark

material obscures much of the filth. "I still have not found the most suitable victim. He must be perfect, oui? Parfait!" When we are not hunting for a fool, Monsieur D. amuses himself by learning the Latin chants and crossing himself...

Now I begin to understand the scope of Monsieur D.'s far reaching plans. What a horrible little man. I must remember that he wants to be called "Tartuffe." At our chosen cathedral Monsieur O. was quite taken in again by "Tartuffe's" play acting. He does rather well in his deception by himself, and I oft times wander at my role in the whole of this. No matter, I shall stay, must stay tight to his side at all costs even if it means I too must fall on my – now greatly bruised – knees yet again, imitating the false holiness of this pretender. I feel a prick at my conscience to treat honest Christian men and women so, but Monsieur– Tartuffe must appear genuine...

Each deception and act of trickery is worse than the one that preceded it! Et maintenant, Tartuffe has seen to it that we have taken up residence in the very home of Monsieur O. himself. How the remainder of the family suffers. Mais, I must concede that to be warm, to have one's hunger satisfied and to be dressed in freshly washed garments does much for the soul. My habit does itch rather dreadfully though. How fortunate that I have a quick and sound mind and have a talent for learning. Mons– Tartuffe has pressured me into chanting with him while we are in that shrine of his. When his attention is directed elsewhere, I often stop to mutter a few "Hail Marie's" and have turned to actually punishing myself to do penance in some way for my sins against heaven and this family. Mon Dieu! I do believe I am falling into this mad fantasy of his...

I have begun to see cracks in his carefully composed façade! No man can resist the pleasures of the flesh, and once I noticed his...inclinations, without appearing to subvert him, I have been whispering in his ear about Madame E. Not long hence, just a few more pushes...

What has he done, the silly fool? Casting his son out of his house and breaking off his daughter's engagement? Can he not see that Tartuffe is as real as the wig on his head? Yet a little further I fear I

must carry this deception, but ah, not to permanently ruin the man. I nonetheless have confidence in my skills, and there is the matter of that sharp tongued maid, Dorine. I think I might have a word with her. Discreetly of course. While I am thinking of it, I must make haste and prepare copies of the documents in that strongbox and of the deeds to the house. Monsi– Tartuffe, I must yet think of him as that – is drawing the noose tight about his own neck...

Dorine has agreed to conceal my absence. I rather think that she wants to teach Monsieur O. a lesson. And that old lady aussi. Tartuffe has been caught making advances on Mme. E. but too late, much too late for Monsieur O. to be able to take appropriate action. I must hurry before Tartuffe finds me missing. I believe he wants me to dress him in a manner befitting a noble. Of all the wicked men in the world, Tartuffe is the most brazen. Why, after being accused of something wicked and yet perfectly true, I myself heard him cry out to Monsieur O. that he was worthless. And that deceiver soon shall be, if I have anything to say about it. Where is that awful habit? I must make haste...

Ah sweet bliss, the look on Tar– Monsieur D.'s face when he realized he was caught, and that I had a hand in it. I begin to remember what I like about such endeavours. Monsieur O. is safe, he was never in any actual trouble, pas vraiment, and I do believe Dorine looks quite the chat avec la crème at this moment. I bow to her, just slightly, a gesture she returns with a saucy wink. Quelle dommage, that I had so little time to spend in her presence. I rather admire a woman who is able to judge and resolve difficult situations in an calm, rational and expedient manner. The family looks quite relieved, Monsieur D. has finally been brought to justice, and I shall return to the palace to claim my reward and bask in the good graces of a king pleased with a task satisfactorily completed.

In the gutter again. Je déteste this occupation...