

# TARTUFFE

Andrew Hilton & Dominic Power  
*after Molière*

Revised Edition



First published in March 2017 by Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory  
Bristol

This revised edition published October 2017  
by Favell & Marsden  
in association with Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory

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ISBN 978 1 5272 1136 0

## Introduction

**Jean Baptiste Poquelin** (Molière) was born in Paris in 1622, the son of one of the royal court's *valets de chambre tapissiers*, responsible for the care of the King's furniture and upholstery. He was educated at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont where the education would have included performing scenes from Latin theatre and instruction in rhetoric.

As the eldest son of the family, his father intended he should follow in his own footsteps, but at the age of 21 Jean Baptiste determined to make a life in the theatre, an enthusiasm that had been innocently encouraged by his maternal grandfather's own passion for playgoing. It was an extraordinary decision for a middle-class young man with good prospects. Theatre was perhaps even less respectable in seventeenth century Paris than it was in Shakespeare's London, and may not have thrived at all had it not been for the patronage of the King. The Paris church routinely excommunicated professional actors and was to prove utterly unforgiving to Molière at the end of his life.

But Jean Baptiste had fallen in love with the actress Madeleine Béjart (he later married her daughter – some say her sister – Armande). In 1643, with Madeleine and about a dozen others, he formed the 'Illustre Théâtre' – soon changing his name to 'Molière', possibly to spare his family embarrassment.

The project was financially disastrous, earning Molière some periods in prison for debt, and in 1645 he and the rump of the company left the capital to work in the provinces, where they remained for over a decade. Out of the Paris spotlight, Molière began to write. His success as a dramatist and the maturing skills of the ensemble encouraged them to try their luck once more in Paris. On October 24th 1658, a performance of *Le Docteur Amoureux* so impressed the King and Court that the company was granted use of one of Paris' best theatres and the title of the 'Troupe de Monsieur' ('Monsieur' being Louis XIV's brother, the duc d'Orléans).

In 1663 royal patronage saw Molière being granted a pension of 1,000 livres, and in the following year the King agreed to be

godfather to his first child, Louis. In 1665 the company became the 'Troupe du Roi', and Molière's annual pension was raised to 6,000 livres.

On February 17th 1673, the exhausted Molière suffered a haemorrhage while playing the role of the hypochondriac Argan in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. He died later that night at his home on the Rue Richelieu. The local priests refused to take his confession and forbade his burial in holy ground. The King, however, interceded and under the cover of darkness he was buried in the Cemetery Saint Joseph. In 1817 his remains were transferred to a fine tomb in the Père Lachaise Cemetery.

**Tartuffe**, finally publicly performed and published in 1669, portrays a wealthy Parisian citizen, Orgon, being duped by a bogus religious zealot who has inveigled his way into the household as Orgon's personal 'directeur de conscience'. Tartuffe prays louder and longer than anyone else in the local church, wears a hair shirt, self-flagellates, requires a female servant to cover her breast with linen, and claims to give what little money he has to the poor. His real object is to acquire all Orgon's property by alienating him from his son Damis and marrying his daughter Mariane against her will.

Molière presented the play's first three acts before the King and six hundred guests as part of a royal festival, *Plaisirs de L'Île Enchantée*, at Versailles on May 12th 1664 – the first recorded performance, though there may have been other private events before this, very probably including one for the King. Certainly the play's theme was already known in court and church circles because just over a month before the festival the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, a secret but powerful Catholic society of churchmen, courtiers and parliamentarians, had met to discuss how they might "procure the suppression of the evil play of Tartuffe". At this point it seems the play was entitled 'Tartuffe, or The Hypocrite', and the actor playing Tartuffe was costumed as a priest, or at least as a minor churchman.

Five days later, whatever his private feelings about the play, and under pressure from the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, the Archbishop of Paris and the Parliament, the King banned its public performance. A few weeks later, in a vicious attack, the curé of

Saint-Barthelemy – calling Molière “that demon clad in human flesh” – urged that he be burned at the stake to expiate his crime, a fate that had actually befallen a Parisian lawyer only two years earlier for writing verses found similarly abhorrent. It is unlikely that Molière was in such danger, as he continued to enjoy the protection of the King, whose published reasoning for banning the play excused the dramatist from any malevolent intent.

In his Preface to the published version Molière protested about how hard he had worked to make it clear that his *Tartuffe* was not a hypocritical churchman, but an out-and-out scoundrel. But the church’s sensitivity was well-grounded; there had been at least one incident – in Caen in 1660 – where members of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement themselves had been accused of abusing their privileged access to private households – and numerous other examples of hypocrisy by churchmen, including by Charpy de Sainte-Croix and the Abbé Roquette, who Saint-Simon referred to a century later as the “great beast on whom Molière based his *Tartuffe*”.

By 1667 Molière had completed the play and retitled it ‘The Imposter’ – a title that carries a rather different message from ‘The Hypocrite’. He had also changed the name of its central character to ‘Panulfé’, and now costumed him not as a cleric, but as a fashionable man in ‘a small hat, a great wig, a large collar, a sword, and lace on everything’. Believing he had met the King’s concerns, Molière opened the play on August 5th, but on the following day, in the absence of the King who was with his army in Flanders, it was banned by order of Parliament; and on the 11th the Archbishop of Paris forbade all people in his diocese from performing the play, or reading or hearing it read, in public or in private, on pain of excommunication.

Molière had to wait until 1669, when it seems the power of the church – and the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement – had waned, before the King finally granted him the right to produce the play in the public theatre, and to publish it ‘avec privilege du Roy’. Now entitled *Tartuffe ou L’Imposteur* it opened at the Palais-Royal on February 5th 1669, was published on March 23rd, and contributed largely to the most profitable season for Molière’s company in his

lifetime. It has remained one of the most popular plays in the French classical repertoire.

### **Tartuffe in English**

The play was first translated into English by the actor Matthew Medbourne for performance in London in 1670, only months after the public première in Paris. This was also the first English *adaptation* of the play to meet English social conditions. Medbourne reimagined Molière's Roman Catholic Tartuffe as a hypocritical Puritan – an easy and no doubt popular target in the anglo-catholic world of Charles II. He also developed a character to whom Molière gave no words – and possibly not even an appearance – Tartuffe's servant, Laurent. Medbourne's Laurent falls in love with the maid Dorine and becomes the agency by which the family's fortunes are saved at the dénouement; the published text declares it “render'd into English with much addition and advantage by M. Medbourne”.

The play was then plundered by the London theatre for both themes and devices, including in a 1689 play by John Crowne which – in a reversal of Medbourne's purpose – targeted the allegedly fraudulent behaviour of the Roman Catholic priesthood and their lay sympathisers.

There were later translations, including ones by Martin Clare in 1726 and Isaac Bickerstaffe in 1769, and in 1851 a successful production at the Haymarket, featuring the actor-manager Ben Webster as Tartuffe, in a text that claimed to be the first authentic rendering into English of Molière's 1669 version. During these decades there were also relatively frequent performances in London by visiting French companies.

Nonetheless, a translator of the play in 1898, Thomas Constable, mourned a general lack of enthusiasm for French classical theatre, writing in his Preface: “It is little to say that the masterpieces of the greatest French dramatists are not acted in England; except in schools they are hardly read.”

Change did come to some degree after the 2nd World War, when the Comédie-Française performed *Tartuffe* in London in 1945 and again in 1951; and the Bristol Old Vic then pursued this renewed

interest with a series of Molière plays in versions by Miles Malleson – including a *Tartuffe* in 1950.

Malleson's prose translations have been followed more recently by verse translations by Richard Wilbur (first produced in the U.K by the National Theatre in 1967); by Christopher Hampton (RSC at the Barbican 1983), Ranjit Bolt (NT 2002), and Roger McGough (Liverpool Playhouse 2008); with versions in Scots dialect by Liz Lochhead (Edinburgh Lyceum 1986) and an Asian version by Tara Arts (NT 1990).

In the U.S. there was an adaptation by Simon Gray at the Kennedy Centre in 1982, and a 'televangelist' version by Freyda Thomas – *Tartuffe: Born Again* – at the Circle in the Square in Washington in 1996.

### **Reinventing the play for 2017**

*Tartuffe* has fascinated the theatre world, in France and elsewhere, for three and a half centuries, and its portrayal of a pillar of the community being captivated – against all logic and expectation – by a brazen impostor has now acquired an extra resonance.

So, from an initial idea some years ago to attempt a new translation of Molière's play, grew this bolder notion to reinvent the play for 2017.

Even so, we set out to follow Molière's pattern closely, speech by speech, and to write in rhyming couplets – not in Molière's 12 syllable-line Alexandrines, but in the 10 syllable pentameter line more familiar to the English ear. Both intentions became modified as we worked; while retaining the scene structure, we came to see no virtue in sticking to the speech template; and the end-stopped couplet became rarer and rarer, with great use of 'enjambement' (the sense flowing on beyond the rhyme into the next line), while internal rhyming even allowed us to break the couplet pattern altogether a number of times. In the end ear and instinct became our main referees.

Molière's *Tartuffe* wears a mask of Catholic zealotry and, in this, he is a man for Molière's time. He is also an enigma; we, and most members of the family he invades, recognise his hypocrisy, his

lechery and his greed from the start, yet we do not know where he comes from or what causes him to be as he is. In our new era of alternative facts, fake news and political uncertainty, Tartuffe would surely find new opportunities for his guile. The mask he presents to his victims may have changed, but the self-invention, the opportunism and the appetites are timeless.

Between 1664 and 2017 there have, of course, been seismic changes in attitudes and family dynamics and we have adapted accordingly, while remaining essentially true to Molière's narrative. In one instance we have taken a greater liberty; Molière's *deus ex machina* is the offstage intervention of King Louis XIV. Since an intervention by our own royal family is even less probable, we indulge in a mild act of *lèse majesté* by providing our own catalyst for Act 5.

*Andrew Hilton & Dominic Power*



This version of Molière's *Tartuffe* was first presented by *Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory* and *Tobacco Factory Theatres* on April 6th 2017 at the Tobacco Factory, Bristol, with the following cast:

DAME PAMELA OGDEN	Tina Gray
CHARLES OGDEN, her son, a Tory Junior Minister	Christopher Bianchi
EMMA LAWRENCE, her daughter-in-law	Saskia Portway
MELISSA OGDEN, Charles' daughter by his first wife	Daisy May
DANIEL OGDEN, Melissa's twin	Joel Macey
CLEM LAWRENCE, Emma's brother, a journalist	Philip Buck
DANUTA, the Ogdens' Polish live-in housekeeper	Anna Elijasz
VAL, a trainee lawyer, engaged to Melissa	Kenton Thomas
TARTUFFE, author of <i>Our Kid</i>	Mark Meadows
DES LOYAL, senior <i>Sunday Shocker</i> hack	Alan Coveney
Director	Andrew Hilton
Associate Director	Dominic Power
Assistant Director (Attachment)	Phoebe Simmonds
Set & Costume Designer	Sarah Warren
Costume Supervisor	Jane Tooze
Composer & Sound Designer	John Telfer
Lighting Designer	Matthew Graham
Production Photographer	Craig Fuller
Legal Adviser	Martin Davey
Producer	Morag Massey
Production Manager	Nic Prior
Construction Manager	Chris Samuels
Company & Stage Manager	Kevin Smith
Deputy Stage Manager	Samantha Mallinson
Assistant Stage Manager	Megan Hastings
Stage Management Support & Cover	Cassie Harrison
Wardrobe Mistress	Francine Gyll

A large reception room in a three-storey house in Hampstead Garden Suburb in North West London. There are doors to the hall and to the kitchen, and French windows to the garden. For three generations the house has been the London base for a busy family with more important things on their mind than domestic style, and their home has never been blessed by a thoroughgoing makeover. Charles Ogden's second wife, Emma, is content that she has room for her modern Yamaha piano, and the worn, green leather Chesterfield chimes happily with Charles' three decades on the Commons benches in Westminster.

Copies of Tartuffe's autobiography 'Our Kid' and the most recent edition of 'Wisden' are in evidence, as are a part-drunk bottle of Glen Ord whisky and some glasses.

Following Molière's Classical Theatre practice, the action takes place in this one location and on a single day – a high summer day – in the present.

Act One	10.00 am
Act Two	11.30 am
Act Three	12.30 pm
<i>Interval</i>	
Act Four	6.00 pm
Act Five	8.00 pm

*A forward slash (/) indicates where the following speech should intervene*

*The text reflects U.K. politics as they stood in March 2017, with Theresa May heading a majority Conservative administration and Jeremy Corbyn leading the Labour Opposition. There are interesting possibilities of adaptation to meet changed circumstances – minority governments, coalitions or a Labour majority. But whichever pertains, junior Minister or only 'shadow', Charles Ogden remains (in Tartuffe's words) 'an old-school Tory'.*

## ACT ONE 10.00 am

*As the audience enters, the piano is covered with a protective cloth  
When the lights build on a sunny summer morning, CLEM is working on  
a MacBook, a pile of newspapers beside him, and the piano cloth is  
lying on the floor*

*DANIEL & MELISSA are at the piano, improvising a duet ...*

## THE MORAL ASCENDANCY BLUES

DANIEL *Well, I've been down but now I'm up,*

BOTH *Well, I've been down but now I'm up,*

MELISSA *Well I been poor but now my cup  
runneth over. I'm always moral,*

DANIEL *Get what I want without a quarrel,  
just walk and talk and preach like Jesus,*

BOTH *Walk and talk and preach like Jesus,*

MELISSA *And make myself rich as Croesus.  
They're gonna pay up, while I suffer.*

DANIEL *I've had it tough, they'll have it tougher.  
I'm not proud but I'm aloof,*

MELISSA *My reputation's bulletproof,*

BOTH *I got those moral ascendancy blues.*

DANIEL *(Lord have mercy!)*

BOTH *We got those moral ascendancy,  
co-dependency,  
stick like chewing gum to your shoes,  
blues!*

*DANIEL and MELISSA high-five, and CLEM applauds*

CLEM *Shh!*

*Enter DAME PAMELA and EMMA  
DANIEL buries himself in a music score and MELISSA hastily switches to  
something classical on the piano*

PAMELA           If you won't get me a cab, I'll go by bus.  
The 268.

EMMA             Wait, you can't be tired of us  
already, Pam. And Charles is due back soon.

PAMELA           Two whole days! I'm not deaf to the tune  
you play here, a fugue in acute disdain,  
in smirks and sideways looks. Oh, look pained  
you may, you heard that jejune cabaret  
just now. Just the sort of trick they play.  
Stop it, children, be quiet if you can!

MELISSA          Ever so sorry.

DANIEL            We'll be good now, Nan.

PAMELA           'Granny', please. 'Nan' is just an affectation.  
They've both received a first class education  
and yet they try their best to emulate  
under-achievers from a sink estate.

MELISSA          We apologise.

DANIEL            Sincerely, *Grandmamma*.

PAMELA           If you'd struggled hard to come as far  
as I have come, you wouldn't think to make  
a joke of it. If your Dad had had to take  
the dole like mine, you'd *walked* to school on toast  
and margarine, you wouldn't laugh, or boast  
about a clever lyric sneering at Tartuffe.

*During the next speech DANUTA enters*

EMMA             Please, Pam, it's just a harmless spoof,  
no real malice. I really am concerned  
that you're offended, please don't spurn  
our friendship. Tartuffe's a presence here, I'll put  
it that way, not the easiest thing, but  
it's Charles's choice and we support him.  
We've given Tartuffe space. I've given in  
to his requests that [*indicating the piano*] I do no practice  
early in the morning, that we eat at six

instead of eight –

*Upstairs a toilet flushes*

DANUTA He go. Just like the clockwork.

PAMELA Oh, good heavens, girl, must you always lurk?  
Why must this household always be so lax?

DANUTA Beg your pardon. I order you a taxi.  
He text just now. He stuck in Cricklewood.

PAMELA Oh, I see. A taxi? Well, that's good.  
I can wait, of course. There's a train at noon,  
no rush. A coffee, please. Don't forget the spoon,  
Danuta.

*Exit DANUTA*

While she's gone, I must just say  
I hope you all can bring yourselves to play  
a better part towards Tartuffe. You two  
to treat him with the rich regard he's due  
and make him truly welcome in this house.

DANIEL That's pretty hard. He chucks his weight about  
like Rasputin with the Romanovs.

PAMELA You see. Remarks like that do so make me cross!  
Has no-one here the grace to understand –  
it's vicious, envious and deeply underhand  
to carp, snipe and gossip about Tartuffe.  
He *endured* his sordid childhood. The proof  
is set out here so movingly in this book.  
Is it any wonder that the public took  
it to its bosom? 'Our Kid'. I grant you  
the title is a little mawkish, who'd  
deny it, but this book has taught us all  
how such a wretched start can be a call  
to arms. Did he give in, surrender hope?  
No, he fought his way to literacy, found scope  
to market mobile phones or some such thing –  
I'm not *au fait* with all the outs and ins –  
in the remotest mountains of Nepal,  
then gave every penny back, gave it all

away to build three schools, to make them free from their dependency on aid. Now here at home he's brought that clarity of purpose to form a business charity.

CLEM A charity for business is oxymoronic.

PAMELA Ah, Clem, just like you to be ironic. 'Aspiration UK' will pass on business skills to empower the havenots, to fulfill their dreams. No futile handouts. It's meant to unlock potential, harness latent talent.

CLEM Hmm. We're told about his business acumen but doesn't it beg the question, when this supposed financial titan stays rent free, a guest, freeloading with impunity? As for 'Aspiration UK', I wonder sometimes if it's not a front for under-world malfeasance. Guns and cocaine traded?

PAMELA Stop! This house is positively degraded by a sort of inward-looking snobbery. So typical you should sneer and think it robbery.

CLEM Only joking, Pam.

PAMELA In the worst of taste. Time you grew up, Clem, if it's not too late. Your trouble is you couldn't give a fig about the marginalised. You're a Whig, but deaf to anyone who doesn't share your view. As for real experience, you haven't got a clue about what life is like ... up north, or anywhere that's more than the very cheapest tube fare from Charing Cross. Parliamentary sketches? What for? And for whom? I'm sure it fetches you a comfortable income, but it's time you listened to other voices, ones that chime with this. Oh yes, you have some common sense and you certainly keep up a good pretence of benign humour, but at heart you're cynical.

Emotion and compassion are inimical to you. A fact I fear your two ex-wives discovered all too late.

CLEM            Oh, those knives  
                      are out as well.

DANIEL          Gran, what drives me round the bend  
                      is Tartuffe's ubiquity. Every time a friend  
                      of ours calls round, suddenly he's there.  
                      He's been listening from his upstairs lair.  
                      Then when he's fixed us with his beady eye  
                      we wilt. You hear the conversation die.

PAMELA          I expect he's being friendly, though I'm sure  
                      he finds your friends both glib and immature.

DANIEL          More likely he's a kind of voyeur,  
                      enjoying some secret, filthy joke.

PAMELA          That's just absurd.

DANIEL          I sometimes have to choke  
                      back the desire to punch him in the face –

PAMELA          Daniel!

DANIEL          – just for a chance to have the place  
                      to ourselves again. Even worse for Mel.

MELISSA          It's creepy, Gran. Soon as he hears the bell  
                      he's down the stairs. I'm having girlfriends round,  
                      he sits there, he doesn't make a sound,  
                      he just leans forward. Doesn't seem to matter  
                      however private or intimate the chatter,  
                      he sticks it out. Sometimes, to make him go,  
                      we pitch the chat embarrassingly low –  
                      chlamydia, vibrators, hooky dating apps –  
                      anything to make his will collapse,  
                      but it's no good. And if we catch his eye  
                      he'll turn away, as if he saw some thigh  
                      exposed, or an inch too much of breast.

PAMELA          So, now you blame him for being modest.

He respects women. Isn't that progressive?

MELISSA I'd call his modesty passive aggressive.

PAMELA Listen, you two, you've had a cosy start. Your father has indulged you, this life apart, brought up here, in Hampstead Garden Suburb, had everything you've asked for, no need to curb desire – "Daddy, please I want" a refrain that often made your granny wince in pain – and now you're back again from college – or 'Uni', if one really must acknowledge that cant term – your father's paid off both your loans. So don't pretend you've made it on your own. What was it, Melissa? History of Art? At Exeter, of course. Is that a start in life? You seem to me to sit about and chat to friends, to preen and sigh and pout –

MELISSA That's not fair, Gran. You know I'm going to start my Master's in a month.

PAMELA Throwing yet more pointless debt your father's way?

MELISSA No, not true. It's all quite clear. I'll pay for this. I'm not some stupid airhead, Gran, some dilettante. I'm sorted. When we can, of course, I'd like time with my fiancé, Val, but he's always in a whirl of work. My pals / make up for that –

PAMELA A *trainee* lawyer, am I right? Your Val?

*DANUTA brings Pamela's coffee*

MELISSA Yes, articulated to a group that expedite the change from not-for-profits into charities. As moral as Tartuffe in anybody's eyes.

PAMELA The equation's not that simple. You'll learn. And Dan – you're too young to marry – you'd earn your living as an actor, that's your aim? I've seen you once on stage, forget its name –



that piece of nonsense written by your friend from Oxford, in that pub at the World's End. The subject matter was positively obscene. Are you too good for Ibsen, or Racine? I suppose your ideas are too advanced for plays that *entertain*.

CLEM Give the boy a chance.  
At least he works and tries to pay his way.

PAMELA I'm not against him. All I'm trying to say is given all the pain Tartuffe's been through they should acknowledge it, give the man his due.

*Text message alert from DANUTA'S phone*

A little grace, that's all. [*To Emma*] And as for you –

EMMA [*Aside to Clem*] For a moment I thought I'd got off scot-free.

CLEM Oh no, no, you're caught.

PAMELA Of course you have your professional life as a recitalist, but the best wife for a government minister avoids a big display, has the tact to deploy discretion, keeps in the background, out of sight.

EMMA Pamela! You, who used to lead the fight for women's rights, you tell me take the veil?

PAMELA Don't talk rot. But as a feminist curtail your urge to put yourself on show. To spend your days shopping for the bra that will lend you uplift, or the skirt that's far too short. You're not a girl, you know, you're over forty.

EMMA Oh, thank you, Pam.

PAMELA I'm never keen, of course, to make the past an issue, or to force comparisons that may be thought invidious, but their poor mama, despite her *hideous* taste – she was no domestic goddess –

she did embrace the power of being modest.  
A template for the young to imitate,  
not a dish decked out to tempt inebriate  
Parliamentary colleagues at a fete.

EMMA I beg your pardon!

CLEM Come off it, Pam, that's just not on.

PAMELA Oh, it's not just me that cares.  
My friend Claire Frost – *[MEL & DAN chime in with this]*  
she lives across the Square –  
said to me, in strictest confidence,  
your family seems to have lost all sense  
of decorum, that people in your position  
should be discreet.

DANUTA Frost like the Inquisition.  
I work for her, I tell you what I know:  
face like old prune, and everything for show.  
Is nicer here, where everyone are friends.

PAMELA She fired you. You should try to make amends.  
So wrong to attack an old employer.  
Emma, she says you soon may need a lawyer  
to deal with the tabloids. You're in their sights.  
There'll be stories – how you spend your nights.

EMMA I'd rather you stopped, if it's all the same  
to you.

PAMELA Of course the children are to blame.  
Dan's peculiar friends that come and go.

DANUTA The cabbie now in Golders Green. He show  
up soon. As for Frost, she tell you lie.  
I not get fired. No, I tell you why  
I leave her house and bang my notice down:  
not bear her "put this so", her peery frown,  
"in kitchen with your coffee, girl", "don't put  
your shoes in hall", like I was dirty boy in soot  
from out your Dickens books. She is bitter,  
she is what you say a prude, and fitter

for Benedyktyнки Sakramentki  
House in Warsaw where old maids live and see  
no young and punky people having fun.  
Though not to say she living like a nun.  
What she keep hidden in her knicker drawer,  
if you saw you would not call her pure.

PAMELA           Ungrateful girl, that's obviously a lie,  
one which I don't propose to dignify  
with a rebuttal. Emma, I'll wait  
outside. One of you might be good and take  
my bag. A little kindness every day.

EMMA              I'll see you out.

PAMELA           That all you have to say?  
Not a word, after all the things I've said?  
Well, I suppose the family's made its bed  
and now you all must lie upon it.

*PAMELA and EMMA exit. MELISSA and DANIEL follow*

CLEM              That's torn it. There's going to be a struggle.  
My brother-in-law will have to juggle  
his misplaced loyalty to that oily fraud  
upstairs and his family ties. I applaud  
the way you stood up to Dame P. just now.  
When in that mood she tends to cow  
everyone in her immediate orbit.  
We just sit back helpless and absorb it.  
Febrile English reticence. Well done you!

DANUTA           Well done Mel and Dan and Emma too.  
They not lie back flat for her attacks.  
She always like that?

CLEM              A British battle-axe?  
I suppose so, but not always in that way.  
She fought the good fight in her day.  
Workers' rights, abortion law reform,  
Tory feminist who went against the norm  
and made a difference. So depressing  
now, to see her give Tartuffe her blessing,

see her increasingly bizarre behaviour.  
 She really thinks the man some kind of saviour.  
 I need a drink. Join me in a spot of scotch,  
 Danuta?

DANUTA Small one. Not drunk on job. Still got  
 big whole house to Hoover. And then cook lunch.  
*CLEM pours the Glen Ord, a very large one for himself*  
 What I think about Tartuffe – my hunch –  
 he hots for anything in skirt. In trousers  
 too, for all I know. Sight of any flesh arouse  
 him. He like to get your sister in the sack  
 maybe, for fun of paying Charlie back  
 for being kind and trusty. Na zdrowie!

CLEM Na zdrowie! To Anglo-Polish amity!  
 I fear you could be right, you're most observant.  
 I wonder if, by chance, you've seen *The Servant* –  
 a black and white sixties classic movie?  
 Pretty dark, not psychedelic or groovy.  
 Dirk Bogarde's a manservant, name of Barrett,  
 corrupts his boss by means of stick and carrot –  
 or carrot and stick, rather. At first he seems ideal,  
 loyal, flattering, nothing to conceal,  
 but pretty soon he gets to turn the screws  
 in such a way that no one could accuse  
 him of anything in the least suspect,  
 but by the end the master's life is wreck'd.

DANUTA Ah, *Sluzacy!* This I know, is film by Joseph Losey.  
 (*Crossing herself*) Bogarde is Satan, make himself all cosy  
 inside house of rich young man James Fox.  
 You kick out Bogarde, then you change the locks.

CLEM Ideally, yes, that's what they ought to do.  
 But everything you say about Tartuffe's untrue  
 in Charles's mind. The wretch knows how to twist  
 the poor man round his finger. He won't have missed  
 how much he's hated by the rest of us,  
 but why should he give a tinker's cuss?

He can wheedle and flatter, he can charm  
and play the victim, he's safe from any harm –

*Enter EMMA, DAN & MELISSA. Exit DANUTA*

EMMA *[to CLEM]* I see you ducked her final, doorstep riff.  
It's put my migraine back on track, that whiff  
of cordite in the brain. Say 'Hi' for me  
to Charles. He's back. I've got to see  
this wretched headache off in bed before  
I face the day. Sorry to be a bore.

MELISSA Come on, Em, I'll help you get some rest.  
As wicked stepmums go, you're still the best.

CLEM I'll finish my scotch, say a brief 'hello'.  
*[Touching her arm]* Feel better, Sis.

*Exit EMMA and MELISSA*

DANIEL Clem, a private word – you know,  
about this date for Mel and Val – their wedding?  
Could you maybe stop Dad back-pedalling?  
I'm pretty sure – of course I've got no proof –  
that Dad's being leant on by the vile Tartuffe  
to put the wedding off, maybe even scratch  
the whole idea, persuade her Val's no match  
for her. Not 'entrepreneurial' enough,  
the usual creepy motivational guff  
he likes to spout. I see you're not surprised?

CLEM No, I'm afraid rather as I surmised.

DAN Could you tackle Dad, try to put  
some sense back into him? I'd put my foot  
in it. Tartuffe's poisoned the well  
between me and Dad. As far as I can tell  
I'm rapidly becoming persona non grata.

CLEM I'll try but I fear it's a non-starter.

DAN Please, Clem.  
It's not just for Mel, but for both of them.  
Val is ace, special man. She hardly dares

to bring him home these days. A stony stare is all he gets from you-know-who. What's happening to us, Clem? Our life's unravelling. We've let that insinuating shit Tartuffe dictate to us, his word is bulletproof where Dad's concerned. What next? Family mantras on the need for self-reliance, or cant debates against gay sex?

*DANUTA enters with mop and bucket*

CLEM It's complex  
with your Dad, you know –

DANUTA Charles here. In hall.

DAN I'll leave you to it. Please – he must play ball.

*Exit DANIEL*

*Enter CHARLES*

CLEM Morning, Charles.

CHARLES Hello, Clem. Here for lunch again?

CLEM Yes, if that's OK? Like to check on Em,  
see how she's doing, you know. Good trip?

CHARLES Don't go, Danuta . . . *[To Clem]* With you in a tic. –  
Danuta, how is everything? The family well?  
– *[Back to Clem]* The conference was another empty shell,  
but how things are back here is my concern.  
I'm more than ever now compelled to turn  
my mind to hearth and home *[back to Danuta]* –

DANUTA Your wife, she had  
headache Thursday, Friday, yes, oh so bad  
and through last night. I think it still –

CHARLES Tartuffe?

DANUTA Tartuffe? All Thursday sunbathe on the roof,  
spend hours in the shower, eat and sleep –  
he's well.

CHARLES Poor chap!

- DANUTA           Friday worst. No peep  
from her all day. She sick and eat no food  
at all.
- CHARLES           Tartuffe?
- DANUTA           His appetite as rude  
as starving lion that corner antelope.  
He started with the paté, then he cope  
alone with double dover sole – his own  
and Mrs. Ogden’s too – then he moan  
no enough profiterole. His hunger never stop.
- CHARLES           Poor chap!
- DANUTA           I give her pill but only flop  
on sofa, stare at ceiling in the dark.
- CHARLES           And Tartuffe?
- DANUTA           At ten past twelve he park  
his body like a shiny limousine  
in bed and never wake until I clean  
the floor real loud outside his room.
- CHARLES           Poor chap.
- DANUTA           At last at four or five she gets to nap  
– the pill it work at last – but still her head  
is sore, she –
- CHARLES           Tartuffe, he’s still in bed?
- DANUTA           No. Like Phoenix he rise at bang of ten,  
bathe in pools of light and eat for men  
of army starving in the trench.
- CHARLES           Poor chap!
- DANUTA           So now they both are on the mend I’ll tap  
my blind man’s stick *[the mop]* up to her room and say  
you give your wife a loving kiss another day.  
*She exits*
- CLEM               Charles, she’s laughing in your face, can’t you see?

And if I didn't think I'd rather weep  
I'd do the same. You're like a teenage girl  
trying to touch the feet of some world-  
famous cokehead playing the O2.  
What is it, Charles? What has got into you?  
Emma's waiting for the outcome of a scan –  
her constant headaches. You do understand  
the seriousness – ?

CHARLES Don't fret at that. Tartuffe  
insists it'll lend his diagnosis proof:  
the cause is merely psychosomatic.

CLEM Oh yes, and when did he take the Hippocratic  
Oath?

CHARLES There's evidence these so called 'experts'  
do little good, it's the bank account that hurts.  
Imagine what that private doctor's fee  
could have done in an underfunded charity!  
Learn from him, Clem, from Tartuffe. The power  
of positive thinking, not more hours  
spent with quacks at some outrageous price.

CLEM *[Aside]* Thank God she didn't take Tartuffe's advice. –  
Though I hope I'm never quick to condemn  
a man –

CHARLES What have you got against him, Clem?

CLEM I'll tell you what – this ghastly, *ghastly* book.  
The wretched thing is everywhere you look  
these days. The 'misery memoir' par  
excellence. Raised in a broken-down car –

CHARLES A caravan, a stationary caravan.

CLEM OK. A caravan. In North Wales? Llan –  
something, was it? They all begin with Llan,  
don't they?

CHARLES Prestatyn. A caravan below  
the sea wall in Prestatyn. You know



the North Wales coast of course?

CLEM  
OK,  
point taken, I don't. But is the place  
of special import? Just the clichéd slum,  
rank with damp. And, of course a harlot Mum  
and violent Dad. I'd give it credence,  
some at least, if I'd picked up any sense  
he'd ever lived a moment north or west  
of Hatton Cross. You might do well to test  
*him* on Welsh resorts, what he really knows.

CHARLES  
Stop it! I will not tolerate these low  
jibes about a man who's endured so much  
and had the courage to reach out and touch  
the world, to make them understand –

CLEM  
For God's sake, Charles, misfortune is his *brand*,  
his USP. His struggle out from under  
his parents' grip – where are they now, I wonder?  
I'd love to hear their version of the story.

CHARLES  
Clem – !

CLEM  
Can't you see, it's all a calculation  
designed to tug the heartstrings of the nation,  
perfectly calibrated on every mawkish page  
to satisfy a superficial age  
with titillating, hardcore misery porn,  
while he sits back and lets the punters fawn.  
By the way, this is a decent drop  
of scotch.

CHARLES  
*[Snatching the bottle]* That's Glen Ord. Ninety quid a pop.

CLEM  
In that case I'll polish this last drop off.  
Since when did you begin to cough  
up such vast amounts of cash on booze?

CHARLES  
May I not spend my money how I choose?  
The fact is, Tartuffe is so ascetic  
he rarely drinks, it acts as an emetic.  
Yet this is one tippie he can tolerate.

- CLEM I'd no idea he was so delicate.  
Where is he now?
- CHARLES On Saturdays he keeps  
to his room sometimes, his working weeks  
are so demanding. And perhaps – don't smile –  
he finds the climate here growing hostile?
- CLEM No wonder. I gather he's not paying rent  
in spite of all his royalties?
- CHARLES Every cent  
he earns that way contributes to the cause.
- CLEM Oh, of course, the cause, how could I forget?
- CHARLES Clem, do you have to see goodness as a threat?  
Is there no-one you see worthy of respect,  
whose motives you haven't found suspect,  
that, living or dead, you actually admire?
- CLEM Well, if you held my feet to the fire –  
Attlee, Orwell, maybe Otis Redding ...  
No, definitely Otis.
- CHARLES Don't think I don't notice  
how you accuse Tartuffe of feather bedding  
while you are happy to make free  
with my involuntary hospitality.  
If Tartuffe is culpable, so are you.
- CLEM I suppose that may be partly true.  
But have you checked him out, Charles? A fortune  
selling mobiles in the mountains of Nepal?  
Does that make sense? And those schools he paid  
for? You've phoned a Sherpa, have you, made  
a call or two to wish them well and ask  
them to corroborate that noble task?
- CHARLES That's ridiculous, and it's insulting.
- CLEM Maybe so. But this 'cause' you're funding  
here – 'AspirationUK.com'? An outfit  
he says he's converting to a charity.

You've proof of that? You've lawyers on the case?

CHARLES Clem, these things take time! Must you debase every honest man's attempt to change the world? Your lip – there – so perpetually curled. Take someone principled, idealistic, they're 'dishonest', at best 'unrealistic'. Your parliamentary sketches, in their way they're witty, but you actually say what? That peer's a crook, that MP a creep, and the Speaker smirks like Uriah Heep?

CLEM I'm holding them to account. It's the job of the parliamentary sketch to do in any member behaving like an arse.

CHARLES Even me, I know.

CLEM No-one deserves a pass, friend or foe, in power. I claim carte blanche to excoriate you when I get the chance / and that –

CHARLES Not everything, *everyone* is rotten to the core. And have you forgotten – Tartuffe's outside the Westminster bubble. He's experienced the kind of trouble real people face. You think this book is ghastly? Well let me tell you that you vastly underestimate its power to motivate, to speak to that great but voiceless estate of folk who know they've been taken for a ride. I was astonished, I almost cried at what he'd written here. He'd laid bare the manifest failure of the welfare state. I wanted it in print, he demurred. Eventually, he let me put a word in in the right place. I must confess, the fact that 'Our Kid' 's a roaring success has given me the greatest satisfaction. And what is more, it's stung me into action.

The new way we've designed is being assessed.  
Such ambition! Even the PM's impressed.

CLEM Why does 'new way' somehow make me shiver?

CHARLES Perhaps because your type would never give  
another voice a shout?

CLEM Well, maybe not.  
Oh, Charles, let's not both of us get hot  
about all this. There's – well, Mel's engagement  
to Val. What sort of arrangement  
have you made?

CHARLES Need you really interfere?

CLEM I'm doing it for Mel, she wants you there.  
There's been a strain between you two of late,  
but that's no reason why she has to wait  
to be happy. There's no need to frown,  
it needn't turn your schedules upside down,  
just name a date that suits. Mel will do the rest.  
She'll be happy if you're just there to bless  
her union.

CHARLES I may have plans that I'll commune  
to her in time.

CLEM Well, they're going to do it soon,  
and she'd like her family to attend.  
Focus for a moment and tell them when.

CHARLES You accept, I hope, this isn't your affair?  
Comprehend, perhaps, my children's welfare  
is above the pay scale of a brother-in-law?  
'Wait to be happy'? What a ridiculous thought.  
Mel and Dan have never had to suffer.  
My wealth has always been there as a buffer.  
While poor Tartuffe, despite his wretched start –

CLEM Oh God, please, Charles!

CHARLES – has shown he has the heart,  
the character and strength to rise above

violence, cruelty and the absence of love  
to seize success, become a moral force.  
I know that amuses you. Of course  
people like you, sophisticated, clever,  
despise Tartuffe. You see his endeavour  
as a trick. There's nothing more to say.  
We've just come to see things in a different way.  
I've admired you, no, seen you as a friend,  
but this difference could truly spell the end  
of our friendship, for what it's worth.

*From above comes a low droning vocal sound*

CLEM                    This is too much! What now? What on earth – ?

CHARLES              You wouldn't understand. A spiritual exercise.  
He does it for an hour to help him rise,  
to focus on the task in hand, banish fears.  
It's self-reliant, unlike the selfish prayers  
you offer up in church. It's admirable, I think.

*CHARLES exits*

CLEM                    This place is mad. I need another drink.

*As CLEM helps himself generously from the bottle, the droning continues  
Fortunately, it is soon topped by the sound of Dan & Mel singing at the  
piano.*

## ACT TWO 11.30

*Melissa is tootling at the piano. Enter Charles*

- CHARLES           Melissa, my dear, we ... we need a chat.
- MELISSA           Of course, Dad. Is something the matter?
- CHARLES           I wouldn't like us to be overheard.
- MELISSA           Ooh, that sounds serious. Mum's the word!  
It's not Emma, is it? She's not really ill?
- CHARLES           Emma? No, all in the mind. Er ... you will  
be wondering about your wedding. A date.
- MELISSA           Oh, thanks, Dad! You know how much I hate  
to bother you, you've so much on.
- CHARLES           That's not –
- MELISSA           What?
- CHARLES           Our family, Mel,  
It's always been a unit, so ... so well  
*in tune*. Fought its battles all together.  
Such a strength that is, you know, to weather  
every storm –
- MELISSA           What is it, Dad? You're nervous,  
that's not you. What's wrong? You always taught us  
to be bold.
- CHARLES           Mel, there's things that I've been told ...  
I know you think you love your Val, and he's  
well and good in some respects. I'm pleased  
to have got to know him; other cultures  
popping in here, keeps the tabloid vultures  
in their cage where race and our own record  
is concerned.
- MELISSA           Dad?
- CHARLES           Virile, too, no doubt? Affords  
you all a healthy, modern girl requires?

- MELISSA           What? You can't say that! What on earth inspires all this? That's racist, Dad!
- CHARLES           Yes, I take that back, slipped out from God knows where.
- MEL                *[Aside]* I know where.
- CHARLES           The truth, the fact is I want you not to marry Val.
- MELISSA           What?
- CHARLES           He's not for you, Mel. OK for a pal – and, as I say, he's always welcome here – but, sources tell me, since he came down last year he's 'played the field', if that's the phrase you use. While you were revising hard, eschewing all temptations, thinking of career, oh he was having fun. Oh yes, it's not gone unnoticed here. Tartuffe could fill you in.
- MELISSA           I'm sure he could. No doubt list me every sin furnished by his warped imagination. How dare he interfere? Indignation's not the word, Dad –
- CHARLES           Mel –
- MELISSA           And who I choose to spend my life with? What's next? Refuse your blessing, like some antiquated, red-faced Presbyterian who'd rather see me dead than married to a Catholic? Isn't it for me – ?
- CHARLES           Tartuffe. Tell me what you think, what you see?
- MELISSA           What?
- CHARLES           Tartuffe. He's been with us now all year. You've had time to size him up, get a clear impression of the man he is.
- MELISSA           Well, I know how much he means to you. Honestly though –

CHARLES He's changed my whole perspective, Mel, he's ... *rebooted* me. I sometimes can't conceive the man I was. Career MP, flying high for sure, but yet no thought of asking why, or what it is that we believe. Only self-esteem, ambition for the ermined shelf to snooze on when we're old. Now we've purpose with a heart and soul. Evangelists would call us 'born again'. That's how I feel, though deities don't figure in the mix. We are the laity's renewal force, and we must bond as one, Melissa. Crusaders, if you like, bang the drum for a life of self-reliance, hope and moral truth.

*DANUTA enters unnoticed, again with mop and bucket*

That's why you should think about Tartuffe.

MELISSA Think about him how?

CHARLES Marry *him* my dear.

MELISSA What?

CHARLES Well?

MELISSA I'm sorry, Dad, but did I hear ... ?

CHARLES What?

MELISSA Did I ... ? Who d'you think I should marry?

CHARLES Tartuffe.

MELISSA Tartuffe!

CHARLES Tartuffe. Into our family.  
Just imagine it – a permanent place with us in this house. Together, in a space consecrated to our great mission. Oh I know he may seem far above you – no, no! He has noticed you, admired you, Mel, let me assure – What the ...? Where the hell did you spring from? This is a private chat.



DANUTA I hear the strange thing in this house but – *tak!* – this, how you say, take the cracker.

MELISSA Danuta –

CHARLES It's strange, is it, to your ragbag of a mind that I should wish my only daughter find a soul-mate with whom to share her life?

DANUTA So strange I not believe you say it. Wife to man who run us all around the house, who eat your food and drink your wine and shout for more till cupboard bare? It must be joke or you have senior minute, or you smoke something that make your head go –

CHARLES Will you be quiet! Ignore her, Mel. I tell you who –

DANUTA Or you be drunk. I'm not believing it. This is midsummer crazy. He must have fit. Mind gone mad like rushing train off rail gone bendy in bad kind of sun. I fail believe a word.

CHARLES What you believe is neither here nor there. Please go.

DANUTA I have to mop.

CHARLES Either mop another room or take some breakfast to Tartuffe. You know how he is steadfast in his need to eat on time and well. We mustn't see him lose his strength or sell him short, the man's so precious to us all. So go on, jump to it, leave us. Leave us! Go!

*Danuta affects to exit*

Melissa, look at this with different eyes.  
Tartuffe renews our purpose, defies  
the flabby-souled passivity we've inhaled.  
From that damp and sordid caravan in Wales

he's brought us faith, new thinking –

DANUTA           It *must be* drinking. He talk  
like teenage dream or senile man that walk  
in cloud with fairy friend and not see shit  
collecting on his shoe.

CHARLES           What? What is it  
you cannot understand? Find a tray and take  
some food upstairs. Break some eggs and make  
an omelette, brew some coffee, squeeze an orange,  
just leave us here to talk in peace!

DANUTA           I arrange  
all that two hours ago. He eat like horse,  
throw me back the tray (he spill the sauce),  
then tell me come downstairs and mop the floor  
like he was boss man here.

CHARLES           Well, you can be sure  
he only wanted to be certain you  
were using time I pay for – generously – to  
the best advantage. Now please mop or sweep  
another room.

DANUTA           I done them all. I keep  
my earphones in, not hear your funny chat.  
Ignore Danuta. Pretend I only cat  
asleep on sofa while you persuade your Mel  
to marry with the creepy guest from hell.

*She plugs her earphones in*

CHARLES           How dare you – ! Mel, it's very hard to ... She  
really gets my goat, that girl, she's  
like a limpet, no a *limpet mine*, clinging  
to this fantastic ship we're sailing  
into new and undiscovered waters.

MELISSA           Dad –

CHARLES           Ignore her, Mel, let's both ignore her.

*Danuta sings*

Oh, for God's sake!

DANUTA *[Loud over song in her ears]* A lovely, soppy song!  
Young pair make love and run away, along  
from home a hundred mile. I shut up now.

CHARLES I – ! Can she hear us, Mel? It's this, it's how  
we live, we reconceive and reconstruct  
our mode of life. Tartuffe, you know, has plucked  
us out of nowhere. Yes, I know I'm *known* –  
perhaps a rising star, waiting for a phone-  
call from the PM – don't put that about,  
may come to nothing – but there's no doubt,  
I've been chosen!

MELISSA By the PM?

CHARLES By Tartuffe!  
His commitment here, his love. The proof  
is in the sacrifice he's made to live  
with us and share what he can give  
the nation, Mel. Tartuffe will be the lead, tease  
us from our slack dependencies, release  
our full potential, make us citizens  
of a world in which –

DANUTA You live in caravan  
or in cardboard box below the bridge  
while man on second floor he raid your fridge  
and laugh all way to bank. He fraud that man!

CHARLES I am exercising patience here, Danuta,  
but I will not very long. Tartuffe is  
humble and sincere, a victim of misfortune  
that *might* have made him what you say / but –

DANUTA You blind? You mad? I take him food, I lay  
his clothes out nice on bed, I pick his rubbish  
off the floor (he pinch my bum like I his dish,  
you say, or whore?). Never he say thanks for it  
or make –

CHARLES I warn you, I will not permit –

- DANUTA No, you listen me. You think Tarfuffe is what you call 'a gentleman'? Is proof he always take his shower when I clean and let his towel slip, make sure I seen his private part he wave about I think for me to blush while he make smile and wink me like he have the biggest prick in town? You good man, Charles, Tartuffe he bring you down, he, how you say, take you for a riding, live here, spend your money, you providing everything he need like he a starving beggar from Mumbai! He make my blood boil and you want your daughter Mel to spoil her life –
- CHARLES Oh, can't you rant! A Polish peasant with a Mickey Mouse degree in patent ways to read the stars!
- DANUTA In *astrophysic* my degree, from Cracow / University.
- CHARLES How dare you stick your oar in all the time! You're paid to cook and clean, not grace us with your thoughts or vent your spleen. And for your *work* – I'll tell you now – we hate the stink of bleach that greets us at the gate and tracks us round the house like broken wind. And for your cooking, an undisciplined infant could construct a better menu to sustain hard-working people through a busy week. Fish on every Friday – God, the Pope himself, I'm sure, has missed the odd one in his life! And if I hear you mangle English grammar one more time I might just strangle you at dawn! Get out, get out, get out!
- MELISSA Dad – !
- CHARLES You be quiet, too! This woman makes me mad! If it wouldn't be tabloid food and drink I'd sack

her on the spot and see her hurried back to Poland!

MELISSA I can't believe I'm hearing this!

CHARLES Then listen harder. Perhaps you'll get the gist. Wed your Val, if you must. On any date you choose. I won't be there, nor Emma, nor anyone who's respect for me or for this house. Think on Tartuffe, Melissa, or pack your bags, begone.

*He exits*

DANUTA I think I time my entrance very bad.

MELISSA Danuta, did my Dad say all that? Am I awake? Bad enough to chuck me out, but all that crazy stuff he said to you. I'm sorry, I'm ashamed.

DANUTA He not himself. Sick virus in the brain. Blame Emperor live on second floor.

MELISSA Shit, can't you ever get it right – the floor?

DANUTA Sorry, what?

MELISSA Ground floor, first floor! Tartuffe's apartment's on the first. The bloody roof's where he belongs. No, tethered in the cellar, the troglodyte from hell who's never ever going to leave us. Oh God, I'm sorry, sorry ...

DANUTA Sokay, Mel. This bad time for all you people in this house, like it been – *[offering cloth]* here, only dust a bit with it, it clean – like it not your own, like foreign army try to turn it into barracks. But no need you cry.

MELISSA Easy to say that. But what am I to do?

DANUTA Your life your own. Not marry to please fool you call your Dad. Tell him he should marry with Tartuffe, pick him up and carry him through door like love's young dream. You marry Val.

*A pause*

My parents poor. They want me marry well,  
not go to university, not think 'career'.  
And maybe they were right. I end up here  
and with degree – *my PhD!* – in astrophysic  
cook and clean and sometime make you sick  
with stink of bleach. You love him well, I guess.

MELISSA My Dad? Of course.

DANUTA I mean your Val.

MELISSA Oh. Oh yes,  
I love him very much.

DANUTA And he loves you?

MELISSA He does. No doubt at all for nearly two  
years on either side. Not fashionable  
I know to be quite so keen on stable  
twosome at young age. God, I start talk like  
Polish girl who get by well in English, 'spite  
she never learn her past from present tense.

DANUTA My tenses never stop me seeing sense.  
So you in love with Val. What problem is there?

MELISSA I think I'm in a state of shock. I never  
thought I'd hear my father talk like that,  
or think like that, or be like that.  
I rather think I'd like to kill myself.

DANUTA Oh, good! You solve it well. This little elf,  
this tiny, peasant brain not think of that.  
Just die, and Val and Tartuffe fight like cat  
together on your grave. Like Hamlet and  
the other one – forget his name – the man  
who poison sword at end of play. Good Polish  
film in that, big hole in ground, soulish wind –

MELISSA Oh, do shut up! Or tell me what to do!

DANUTA [*Shrugging*] You marry Val.

MELISSA About my Dad! Don't tell me you can't see I have a problem here? My Dad's besotted with these daft ideas, these mad, completely insubstantial dreams that fraud Tartuffe has – God, I'd like a poisoned sword to stick up his fat arse! My Dad's a minister of state! It's weird, Danuta, it's sinister the way Tartuffe is making him a fool.

DANUTA Your Dad is good man, Mel, I know you'll see him, how you say, himself again in week or two. Don't fret the things he say to me. He kind to me when I arrive from frosty woman cross the square, he pleased with how I speak and cook. I like him, only he not laugh at life no more, and only see Tartuffe. Soon he shut the door on him and like your Val again.

MELISSA You're sure of that?

DANUTA I stake my PhD. Eat up my hat.  
Go, make yourself look nice, call up Val,  
have lunch somewhere, tell him he have rival  
in Tartuffe.

VAL *[Off]* Melissa!

DANUTA He here. Go give him kiss.  
He clever boy, he laugh like sink at this.

*Exit DANUTA. Enter VAL*

MELISSA Val, thank God, thank God you're here!

VAL Really? That's strange. I'm surplus, so I hear,  
to your requirements. Learnt it from the cat,  
I think, or was it a post-it note on that fat  
Buddha in the hall? The means is immaterial –

MELISSA Val, what's this?

VAL – It's like some trashy serial,  
the cheapest kind of soap, credits rolling

even now, but there's no breathless waiting for the sequel if you're me. Bloody hell, how could you be so devious, Mel?

MELISSA Val?

VAL I thought you were the real McCoy, heart, integrity, on top of looks. A joy-filled inventory of all that's good. It's certain is it, this?

MELISSA Val, I – I can see you're hurt but tell me, what – ?

VAL Oh, don't go all artless now. Your marriage to Tartuffe, you cow!

MELISSA Marriage – ! Well, since you mention it, though I won't pretend I like your tone –

VAL My tone? You don't –

MELISSA My father has conveyed the feelings of his friend that he, Tartuffe, was reticent to send to me himself –

VAL Reticent – Tartuffe? He wouldn't shrink from telling Jesus when to pee! More front than José Mourinho. But fine, go on, count up his value against mine. His book, that's making millions, his fame, his entrée to the smartest set, his game of *spot the sitting duck*. I'm a swimmer, not a bad one, but so what? I've a glimmer that my rented, one bed flat in Kilburn Park's not good enough for the daughter of the patriarch of new-world shit. You're set on this?

MELISSA Not quite. What would you advise?

VAL What, me?

MELISSA Yes. What would you suggest?

VAL Why ask me?



- MELISSA            Because you're here, I guess.  
And seem to have a lot to say. So on,  
help me to decide, there's no forgone  
conclusion here. Give me the best of your  
brilliant legal mind. Should I tie the knot?
- VAL                    Then yes, indeed. Go marry him, why not?
- MELISSA            You mean that?
- VAL                    I do! *Tartuffe*? Phew, a catch!  
Grab him before some better options hatch  
in his sordid, grasping mind, he thinks again.
- MELISSA            OK, I will.
- VAL                    Good!
- MELISSA            Good!
- VAL                    That's sorted then.  
I'll have that ring if that's OK. Worth  
a few more games from ebay. The dearth  
of other things to do, you know, to while  
away the evenings on your own. Don't smile,  
you snake! You underhand, you sly and grasping shit,  
you never loved me, I should have known it  
couldn't be for real. How could it be?
- MELISSA            Well, think that if you like! Go on, feel free  
to say some more. This bile's been boiling,  
I'm in awe! I don't remember 'snake' taking  
part in foreplay – not that you'd much time for that,  
too keen to make me squeak 'Ooh Val!' –  
or 'sly', or 'shit', or 'underhand'. Are there  
any other insults you would like to air  
to show how much you really hated me,  
held me in contempt while you parked your perky  
little vehicle up my street?
- VAL                    Don't turn  
this all on me! You're the one who's worming  
out of this, who's showing me the door.

MELISSA I'm not! I'm ...Oh, this is stupid, Val. I'm sure I've no idea how ... Please, Val, please we can't ...

VAL Go on like this? No, *Mel*, we bloody can't. I've never been so humiliated. Are you so thick-skinned you fail to – no, you'll never know it, will you, the Ogden silver spoon! – to see what this is like, what it *feels like* for me?

MELISSA I was trying to say, Val, trying to say ...

VAL Not trying hard enough. Trust a blasé child of Ogden, fat cat, snob and just-born again disciple of Tartuffe's tawdry sideshow –

MELISSA Right, that's it. Get out! I never want to see you here again! Not ever, Val!

VAL You mean that?

MELISSA Yes!

VAL Really?

MELISSA Yes. Yes. I –  
Oh, go, go, please go, now Val, please, goodbye!

*MEL collapses on the sofa, head in hands*  
*VAL stares at her for a second and then leaves*  
*The sound of Dan & Mel singing again as the lights go down.*

## ACT THREE 12.30

*Charles' annotated copy of 'Our Kid' sits on the piano or a table  
Sound of hoovering off. Enter TARTUFFE from the garden, carrying  
two bottles of water. After a few moments, a puffing CHARLES  
enters in lycra jogging kit. TARTUFFE gives him a water bottle, but  
before he can enjoy it ...*

- TARTUFFE Wait Charles, complete the celebration  
of our purpose. Let's make the salutation  
in saying our mantra. Inner strength and calm.  
*TARTUFFE stands straight, raises his hands in prayer. CHARLES follows  
his example*  
*(Chanting) Vahaan ek har minat ka janm.*
- CHARLES *(Chanting) Vahaan ek har minat ka janm.*  
*TARTUFFE stretches out his arms and waggles his fingers*
- TARTUFFE Now let your energy forth into the strata  
*(Chanting) Chutiya, chutiya.*
- CHARLES *(Chanting) Chutiya, chutiya.*  
*They bow to each other. CHARLES at last gets a drink*  
Thank you, my friend. I feel so full of vigour.
- TARTUFFE Of course. You're match fit for the bigger  
challenge now. I see a natural leader,  
swimming above the average bottom feeder  
or political plankton. You're the pilot whale,  
the master of the ocean, showing us the way.
- CHARLES Well, yes, I feel ... it could be as you say.  
That martial art you were teaching me,  
I wonder –
- TARTUFFE I'm glad you asked. 'Hap Chi'.  
I learnt it in those mountains in Nepal,  
from a Hap Chi master. Some precious crumbs  
of wisdom from his table.
- CHARLES I'm all-thumbs.
- TARTUFFE Forget your hands and learn to use your feet.

The well-judged kick that aims to meet  
your foe's *upastha*, seat of reproduction,  
will achieve the complete destruction  
of the essence of the wiliest opponent.

CHARLES That seems, you know, somehow rather violent.

TARTUFFE What? Oh no. It's a form of respect.  
You understand, and thereby deflect  
the negative impulse of your foe.  
To make him helpless is to truly know  
him. In business, more than self-defence,  
it's communication, focused, pure, intense.  
But the main thing, Charles, you must remember,  
whales and bottom-feeders, we two number  
among the whales. That's the *aspirational*  
way, that's the selfish *and* the selfless, *moral*  
way to go. Whales –

CHARLES – and bottom-feeders.  
Yes, that's so profound. Though I may just need  
a clearer steer on it, a preciser line  
perhaps ... ?

TARTUFFE No, no, you're there. I know you're fine.  
Charles, don't let the plankton undermine  
your inner strength. Alone on a mountain in Nepal –  
I'd made a fortune, and given it all  
away, I had nothing – but in that golden hour  
I knew for certain: we are our own higher power.

CHARLES Gosh, I remember [*picking up 'Our Kid'*] – page 94 was it?  
Maybe 93. Your epiphany ...

TARTUFFE Giving everything away sets us free.

CHARLES I understand – I think. So much I have to learn.

TARTUFFE Charles, it's me that learns from you. I discern  
an inner drive in you, a will of ice.

CHARLES Oh, well ...

- TARTUFFE But did you follow my advice  
in abstaining from all intimacy –  
the indulgence of *sambhoga* with your wife?
- CHARLES As a matter of fact these days my life  
is so hectic, there's little opportunity,  
but it's hard –
- TARTUFFE You haven't learned immunity  
from the pull of sex? The castrati  
in their condition produced the purest art.
- CHARLES Good God, Tartuffe, you're not suggesting –
- TARTUFFE No, no, I just don't want you investing  
vital energy in physical desire.
- CHARLES I love her, you see. I can't put out the fire  
just like that.
- TARTUFFE I'm not an autocrat  
and not a saint, yet I've been celibate  
for five long years. But I won't dictate  
what you should or shouldn't do.  
You must only do what seems right to you.
- CHARLES Yes, that's right, yes, I do understand.  
I'll make more effort, use more self-command.  
God, that conference in Scotland was maddening,  
I see things so clearly now, so saddening  
to hear the same, unexamined shibboleths  
bandied back and forth, no will to test  
assumptions or to think anew. Thank God  
for 'Our Kid'. I read it in every odd  
moment I could find – the fourth time now –  
in breaks, then on the sleeper coming down  
from Perth. In every read it shows me more,  
so rich, so subtle, and at the same time *raw*.  
This time, just coming through Carlisle,  
I turned again to that bruising though beguiling  
afternoon in Widnes, that Damascene  
moment when you saw that hapless teen-

age child so savagely assaulted  
by its Mum. Distressed but then exalted  
– it's here – page sixty-one, I made  
a note ...

TARTUFFE That's kind.

CHARLES Yes, you were quite remade  
by that event. At only fifteen years of age  
you saw your way! I admit I shed a tear.  
It affected me so much I almost couldn't bear  
to carry on. I nearly shut the book,  
sat there, an idiot, while my shoulders shook.

TARTUFFE Charles, listen, you must never be afraid  
to cry in public. If your grief's displayed  
it's just more honest. Everyone can see  
and share the moment. That's what set me free.

CHARLES That's very wise.

TARTUFFE My journey's been incredible, it's true,  
though there were things that I was made to do  
I don't think I could even now make known.  
A part of me forever just my own,  
a private well filled up with guilt and fear.

CHARLES Not help to share the burden – let me hear ... ?

TARTUFFE You may be right. *[Pause]* So many painful times,  
humiliations, and petty crimes.  
I wonder if you could understand the shame.  
Once when my mam was out there on the game  
I caught my Dad dolled up in one of her frocks.

CHARLES My God!

TARTUFFE He knocked me down and dragged me to the docks.

CHARLES You walked like that, him *en déshabillé*?

TARTUFFE You what?

CHARLES I mean with him got up that way.

- TARTUFFE Oh no. He stole a car. He made *me* steal it.  
The shame of that. Even now I feel it.
- CHARLES Dreadful. How on earth did you survive?
- TARTUFFE At last we found some filthy back street dive.  
I had to watch him lisp and mince and croon –  
drunk, maudlin, madly out of tune –  
yelled “ ‘Ere, our kid, pass around the hat  
for contributions!” It never came to that.  
I remember the song – (*Crooning*) “How are things in  
Glocca Morra”.
- CHARLES From Brigadoon?
- TARTUFFE Mmm.  
The men were brutes but felt some moral horror.  
They beat him up and threw him on the street.
- CHARLES My poor friend, how could they cheat  
you of your childhood so?
- TARTUFFE I don’t know.  
*[Choking]* Imagine, my sole role model  
lying in a stupor in a puddle.  
Charles, you’re like the father I never had.
- CHARLES Oh, dear boy.
- TARTUFFE *[Crying out]* Dad!  
*He embraces CHARLES*
- CHARLES Whatever life threw at you, you were equal  
to it.
- TARTUFFE I suppose it could go in a sequel,  
that story. Alone it’s worth a chapter.
- CHARLES I’ve had a thought, with the right adapter  
‘Our Kid’ would translate brilliantly to the screen.  
Remember that remarkably haunting scene –  
your mam in bed with her latest so called beau?  
You describe – quite beautifully – how a glow  
suffused the caravan, caused by the static

from the nylon sheets. It's really cinematic.

TARTUFFE            Only if the director really understood my journey. Perhaps Jude Law could play me as an adult – if the rights were sold?

CHARLES            Brilliant casting!

TARTUFFE            Maybe. Not too old?

CHARLES            Oh for heaven's sake – Danuta!

DANUTA             *[Off]* I come!

CHARLES            That noise! Surely it should be done by now!

*The hoovering stops. Enter DANUTA. Open shirt, knotted below her bra, low-cut jeans*

Tartuffe and I are trying to talk. Could you kindly move your hoovering elsewhere?

DANUTA            OK. I empty bins instead.

*She bends down to reach one*

CHARLES            And – oh I say – this really must be said – I'm sure, Tartuffe here would agree – your dress?

TARTUFFE            Oh, yes.

CHARLES            A little more discretion, just a little less *on show*? The dignity of womanhood is a thing we must restore, we should perhaps rewind the spool to a more austere age, agree?

DANUTA            Perhaps you like me here to cover badly with a towel instead?

CHARLES            I'm at a loss to grasp your point. Not *shed* your clothes, but cover up, be more discreet.

TARTUFFE            In language too, Danuta. Don't compete for a distinguished man's attention by simply showing off.



CHARLES Perhaps you could apply  
yourself to lunch? I think I heard Val leave  
which makes the party – um – six, I believe.  
Just a salad and some cold meats, no wine.  
My children drink far too much, combine  
beer and wine with God knows what. Danuta, please?

DANUTA OK, I go. Your distinguished guest, he's  
happy with salad lunch, no booze? I see  
no lick his lips.

CHARLES That's quite enough, Danuta. Go.

*Danuta exits*

That girl's a trial to us all. Got no  
shred of sense of when to speak, when to hold  
her tongue.

*The hoover starts up again – a quick blast*

Danut – ! Why, only an hour ago  
she butted in when I was – actually, that's  
a thing we must discuss, because the fat's  
in the fire where Melissa is concerned.  
My approach on your behalf was spurned  
with some – well, vigour, you might say – and there's  
no doubt your work's cut out if you're to fare  
much better on your own behalf.

TARTUFFE My feelings  
for Melissa, though they're deepening  
every hour – her suppleness of mind,  
her music, that *modesty* we so rarely find,  
affect me so that I could almost lose  
my sense of purpose – Charles, do not abuse  
the delicacy of her feelings, that  
uniquely calibrated fabric  
of desire we call the heart to foist an  
unwelcome, unattractive, harsh-voiced man  
like me upon her.

CHARLES Dear chap, you cannot –

TARTUFFE No, Charles, no. I will extinguish, quite blot

out unreciprocated love. My overwhelming wish is that 'Casanova Val' she sees for what he is. I recoil from criticising character, or spoiling any woman's thoughts of any man, but *Val* – the stories I have heard I doubt if I shall ever fail to shudder when I think of Mel, our dear, dear Mel, succumbing to the spell of such a dissolute, dissimulating rogue.

CHARLES      Dear boy, of course I know your thinking is typically unselfish and apposite. I know no jealousies or shrill, dishonest motive ever moves you. I will use what influence I have. My debt to you I'll not attempt to weigh. Every day it grows more great. Lunch is soon, but first I'll go upstairs with this, start again at chapter one, 'Beginnings'. Could any title now be apter?

*Exit CHARLES. TARTUFFE reflects a moment and then exits by another door*

DANUTA      *[Off]* Keep hands yourself, dirty man! Odpieprz się!

*A note or two from the piano for a brief time-lapse*

*Enter DANIEL and CLEM*

DANIEL      This is the bloody limit, Clem. I swear I'll cut his bollocks off, fry them, ram the pair of them down his throat until he chokes. Marry Mel? She'd rather sell herself to blokes at twenty quid a time than hit the sack with that disgusting heap of monomatic, self-advertising / oily –

CLEM          Dan, take a breath. You know damn well that Mel would never dream of such a thing. This is just another madness promising to derail your Dad's career. You won't help him by getting all steamed up and threatening

medieval quarterings.

DANIEL Well, maybe not,  
but a punch in the nose or a mighty swat  
across his arse might do the trick and make  
him sling his hook.

CLEM Oh Dan, please, for God's sake  
talk like a grown-up. Great story for the hacks –  
“son of junior Minister attacks  
celebrated business guru”. Anyway,  
fisticuffs, believe me, isn't you. Stay  
out of this, my sister can allay  
all fears, I know, and knock this nonsense  
on the head, this ridiculous pretence  
that Mel will fall into Tartuffe's arms after  
fatherly advice. You'd hear the laughter  
from here to Notting Hill. Em is coming down,  
she's going to tackle Tartuffe now,  
so let's both hop it and allow her space  
to operate.

DANIEL Not me, I'm staying to face  
the viper down, lend Em some steel and grit.  
A silent backup if you like, poised to land a hit –

CLEM Dan, no! Trust Em to use her charms. I hear  
them on the stairs. Try not to appear  
an avenging angel. Go and get some air!

*CLEM watches as DANIEL  
heads for the French windows, then exits. DANIEL turns back and  
hides behind the Chesterfield*

EMMA *[Off]* This room will be quiet. I'd like to have a  
*Enter EMMA and TARTUFFE*  
private word with you, Tartuffe, about a  
rather delicate matter ...

TARTUFFE I obey  
your every wish. You know in what regard  
I hold you, Emma.

- EMMA Thanks. I have been hard on you on one or two occasions. Peace is difficult to maintain, I find, at least in a busy household, young things returning to the nest from Uni, both scattering chaos around the house, the strain is prone to show. I'm sorry if I've seemed a stony-faced hostess to you, perhaps, at times.
- TARTUFFE Not a shadow of that thought has crossed my mind. I see an ironic smile when over dinner I insist we must reveal our innermost ambitions for the cause, break free from inhibition. You smile now, you see! I amuse you. For you it's just a game.
- EMMA It's just – I can't take seriously your name. Why on earth 'Tartuffe'? Where's that come from? What's wrong with Reg or Kevin, Mike or Tom?
- TARTUFFE You don't know that, you haven't read 'Our Kid'.
- EMMA That's not fair, I meant to, well I did, or rather if I'm truthful, dipped in and out. I do know that your father was a lout but, to be honest, the rest was heavy going.
- TARTUFFE I respect you, Emma, for showing such honesty. I'll tell you why I call myself 'Tartuffe'. I saw one, standing on a shelf in a cake shop.
- EMMA Really?
- TARTUFFE Yes. Mam and I had gone to Bangor, a place she often plied her trade, dolled up in PVC and lycra. She went off with a rep in his Nissan Micra, dumped me by this shop to keep me occupied. You can't know how hunger gnaws at your inside when you see food that's just out of reach. And there was that tartuffe, chocolate and peach

and topped with cream. Asked if I could have it. "Two quid" she said. "Oh, I hoped you'd give it", I said as sweetly as I could, "I've no money." "Clear off before I belt you! Think you're funny, sonny?" I vowed one day I'd go back to Bangor, claim that cake to make up for my anger about everything in my childhood.

EMMA Under the circumstances I suppose you would.

TARTUFFE From that day on I'd only answer to 'Tartuffe'. Of course nobody but me knew why I chose that name and what it meant. For me it was a symbol of attainment. It set me free.

EMMA Isn't a 'tartuffe' a fungus?

TARTUFFE [*Distracted*] Sorry?

EMMA Anyway, here you are – among us – and while you're here, I need your advice. It seems Melissa may have to pay the price for her doting father's new-found zeal.

TARTUFFE First, Emma, let me tell you that I feel your sickness – your migraines – as my own. And while I'm here, know – you're not alone.

EMMA Well, I've seen a specialist, as you know. I've had the scans. We'll see what they show.

TARTUFFE If you'll forgive me, I think that your mistake is to put your faith in experts. The ache you feel is more of the spirit than the head.

EMMA I don't want to talk about this. As I said my concern at this moment is with Mel.

TARTUFFE Emma, Emma, let a dear friend tell you, western medicine has failed to comprehend the many different routes that healing lends. There's something so much finer I would love to try if you'll permit my practised touch?

- EMMA Not my scene,  
no thanks.
- TARTUFFE Dear Emma, seemingly serene  
yet so up-tight. Let me enlighten you.  
Close your eyes, imagine you're a speck, drifting –
- EMMA *[Breaking away]* I have migraines, not a stiff neck.  
About Mel, this absurd idea you marry her.
- TARTUFFE Don't you feel marriage is, deep down, a barrier  
to true communication? On some deeper plane  
we are all married to each other. Let me explain  
about inhibition: your migraines may be caused  
by frustration, now that Charles has paused  
performance of conjugal duties.
- EMMA What?
- TARTUFFE It's my understanding that you're not  
getting any physical satisfaction  
from poor Charles. A distinct lack of action,  
in bed, no Ogden-style seduction.
- EMMA Exactly how did you make that deduction?
- TARTUFFE I sense it. The vibrations that emanate  
from you –
- EMMA For fuck's sake, what?
- TARTUFFE They're palpable. Don't deny them, Em, don't wait.  
I could cure your illness more effectively in bed,  
ditch your inhibitions, tear out every shred  
of guilt, repression. The sex you've missed  
should be right at the top of your bucket list.
- EMMA Good God! Is this the sordid sequel  
to your book? Another new departure, equal  
in depravity to the sheerest  
saintliness your teenage mind professed  
to find on – when was it now – a wet  
and windy day in Widnes? I read  
that bit. What happened to Mr. Compassion?

TARTUFFE Out of fashion, replaced by a Tantric master of the carnal arts. The fact is I see the way you clock Mel's virile friends when Charles is not around, the looks you lend across the room. You're gagging for it, Emma. Charles hasn't got the will, or the stamina, so let me show you true erotic power, show you I can keep it up for hours.

*A brief pause*

EMMA May I correct one detail in this scenario, interject one tiny cavil? Charles propped up in bed, reading Wisden in his flannel pyjamas is more erotic than this trashy drama you've got up, this tacky Soho farce.

TARTUFFE You bitch! Think you can sneer because you're rich? You're just a frigid snob.

EMMA And you're a knob. Now, 'Tartuffe', I could I suppose speak of this to Charles direct, or let it leak out slowly somehow, how you've behaved, but I think the news you're so depraved he might find humiliating, given the passion with which he's fallen for your fashionable, mystic-motivational crap. So here's a deal. Say some 'family mishap' requires you back in Wales, leave no address, and I swear I'll never / breathe a word –

DANIEL *[Emerging]* Em, don't mess with any thought but this – expose him now. We've got him!

EMMA Daniel?

DANIEL Can you believe all that? Every word I heard. Seduce my Dad's beloved wife, would you, you slimy groper, you misogynistic creep?

- EMMA Daniel –
- DANIEL Don't let him off the hook. Don't sweep this under the carpet. Every syllable I've committed to my memory. I'm able, being an actor, to deploy mnemonic skill.  
*[Aside]* The fact the bastard spoke in rhyme will help.
- EMMA Daniel, no! Don't put your father through this. And shame on you for spying like that on us. If the puffball here agrees my terms, we draw a line, put him, 'Our Kid', and any nonsense more out of sight and out of mind.
- DANIEL What? He's tried to ruin my sister's life – and yours. He's lied to Dad –
- EMMA You'll make us all a laughing-stock unless you get a grip, see sense and knock your indignation on the head.
- DANIEL I see the situation clearly, Em, that he – this hypocrite who's hoodwinked not just us but half the British public – that he must be exposed. Our solemn duty, no debate. Here comes Dad.
- Enter CHARLES*
- EMMA Oh, God!
- CHARLES Hullo. I almost ate alone. What's going on?
- EMMA Sorry, dear, I can't –
- EMMA exits*
- CHARLES Emma, what's up, my dear? It's clear that something is. Tartuffe, please fill me in.
- DANIEL I think it might be best if I begin?  
Dad, your guest, this creature here you style



a secular saint I've witnessed try  
to get your wife, dear Emma, into bed!  
No blush, no trace of shame, some threadbare  
bullshit to begin, then this quite obscene,  
creepy claim that he's a sex machine, as if  
this were some cruddy singles venue, stiff  
with lonely housewives craving any man  
who'd give them time of day. She put him bang  
to rights, I'll give her that – I never dreamt  
she could be so frank! I managed to pre-empt  
her offer to the snake to hush the whole  
thing up. Dad, we've – now his cover's blown –  
we've got to publish his hypocrisy, dish him  
in the tabloids, and the Telegraph, get Clem –

CHARLES            Stop! Now! Be quiet! Tartuffe, can there  
be any truth in this, contemplate an affair ... ?

TARTUFFE          Charles, unhappily every word that Daniel's said  
is true. I might protest that 'getting into bed'  
does misrepresent the completeness  
of my passion for your wife, but confess  
to it, I must. I have been helpless, Charles.  
Her purity, so foreign to my heart –  
you know my experience of womanhood's  
so damaged, so debased it's never stood  
me well – she's, completely uninvited,  
and innocently too, of course, lighted  
up my soul. What can I say? I must go,  
of course, and I deserve every show  
of shame, every front page exposé  
that Dan desires. My dream – Aspiration UK –  
well, it's bust, and I must reconcile  
myself to humbler work. High profile  
stuff, I guess it's not for me –

CHARLES            Wait, Tartuffe.  
Are you completely blind? Daniel, is the truth  
of this so obscure to you?

DANIEL             What on earth – ?

- CHARLES Don't interrupt. How dare you vilify this good-hearted man?
- DANIEL Good-hearted? I – I can't believe you're saying that. He's taken you for a fool, Dad. Will you never waken up and see –
- CHARLES Dan, be careful what you say. I won't be called a fool or disobeyed by an immature young boy who thinks he's morally superior –
- TARTUFFE Charles, listen, please! Let Daniel speak. He's right. Call Clem, tell him every sordid detail, he'll pen it well and yet see that you and Em come through with dignity intact. He'll stem all whiff of foolishness, naiveté. Only I should pay the price.
- CHARLES *[To Daniel]* Now, you say ... ?
- DANIEL Dad, he's bluffing, you can't believe this stuff!
- CHARLES Oh for God's sake Daniel, that's enough! Yes, Tartuffe's addresses to your mother are – well, inappropriate, of course, and hardly what one expects of an honoured guest, but a momentary lapse, prompted by a quest for love, the kind of which you know so well he's missed throughout his life, doesn't spell betrayal –
- TARTUFFE Charles –
- CHARLES No, let me speak my mind. See it as a *compliment* to Emma, a recognition of her warmth, her array of talents, her integrity, her *beauty*, Dan. Dear boy, we must see clearly, understand just how important it is now to cut our friend a little slack, not try to gut him

like a fish you've landed in your net.

DANIEL I'm speechless. Was I on another planet?  
I didn't hear 'our friend' declare your Emma  
'gagging for it' or that you, Dad, you lacked  
the 'stamina' to – well, so caught in your career  
you couldn't –

CHARLES That's enough! I will not hear  
another word. You want him out, you're jealous,  
want to alienate, drive a wedge between us.  
Well, you won't. Tartuffe and I, we have plans  
against which all this petty sniping ranks  
as odious as any parliamentary  
back-stabbing I recall. You haven't any  
more to say, I trust. You've friends whose floors  
will welcome you, no doubt, because these doors  
are shut on you, Daniel, pack your things –

TARTUFFE Charles, this is harsh –

CHARLES Don't interfere. Managing  
my family is my prerogative.  
Apologise without condition or live  
elsewhere until you've seen the shaming  
error –

DANIEL Apologise, can you be kidding?  
To this manipulative creep? I'd rather  
stick my hand in puss, spit blood, or smother  
my head in diesel oil.

CHARLES For God's sake, out!  
Not another idiotic word, I'll clout  
you, I swear I will, if you speak again.

*A momentary pause*

DANIEL Jesus Christ!

*DAN exits*

TARTUFFE Charles, I am completely mortified by this.  
This rupture in your family, this pain is  
down to me, my presence here at least.

I must leave. If I can duck Dan's tabloid feast of righteous indignation I'll pursue our plans alone, if not I'll find some new way to survive.

CHARLES My dearest friend, don't dream of giving up the cause. It's the theme I've looked for all my political life. And your place is here.

TARTUFFE But they hate me. Wife son, daughter, all despise me and look to rubbish all my work, 'Our Kid' – the book you so generously encouraged me to write. And can I really stay here out of sight of Emma? You could hardly wish that I had contact with her now, the writing's surely on the wall in that respect.

CHARLES No, no, that's not my way at all. We strike a blow for truth and openness, defy all scandal, live on as we do, that's the way to handle the sullen look, the meretricious slur. Don't avoid my wife. Spend time with her, dine with her, be seen with her around, that's the proper – and the clever – way to drown suspicion.

TARTUFFE Charles, your wisdom, and compassion, they're beyond praise. In a spirit of contrition I'll do exactly as you wish. I – I – I can't, I don't know how ...

CHARLES Don't be afraid to cry, you told me that yourself. Here's a napkin, filched, I'm afraid, from the buffet chap in first class on the train from Perth. Not quite a duck house, is it, but I daresay not right in the eyes of Branson. Should I bribe him with a Commons teaspoon, or cup, d'you think?

TARTUFFE That's very funny, Charles, good chap you are.

CHARLES Well, maybe. But through this silly – hoohah – I've begun to see my way. While Daniel made me wild I'm so much cooler now. You'll find that my commitment to our cause will be redoubled, there'll be no further pause in forward planning. I'm going to give – give Aspiration UK – this house. We can live, have all we need, Em and I, in the flat that comes with my constituency. That's the way to go, downsize, let the cause enjoy a house here in the Suburb. Annoy the Residents Association I've no doubt but we lay down a signal marker, set out our stall by this – this petty sacrifice. It would have gone to Dan and Mel, suffice to set them up for life, but they've no need of feather-bedding, they've the means to feed and clothe themselves – talents, education, all the things the poorest kids in our nation have been so wanting.

TARTUFFE Charles, you've struck me dumb.  
A gift of so magnificent a sum –

CHARLES Don't speak. No words, the gift is for the cause.  
*[Phoning]* I'll call my lawyer, Frank at Hawse & Hawse, get this done right now. *[Dialling]* If this puts the skids under my relations with my own two kids, if that's the price I pay – no, no thanks, Tartuffe, this has to be the way. Ah, Frank –

*The sound of Mel & Dan singing again as CHARLES begins to exit*

it's Charles. Trust you're well, old chap? Look, I need a speedy bit of legal footwork. A deed of gift. I'm giving up my Hampstead house, donating it in fact. Oh, not a shred of doubt, never been more sure of anything in my life ...

*and CHARLES has gone. TARTUFFE pockets the Glen Ord and follows.*

